The conservative challenge : Henry Kissinger and the ideological crisis of American foreign policy

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THE CONSERVATIVE CHALLENGE :

HENRY KISSINGER AND THE IDEOLOGICAL CRISIS

OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

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ABSTRACT

When the first Nixon Administration took office, all the main conditions that make foreign policy innovation likely were present in an acute form: a combination of external and domestic crises coupled with widespread political self-doubt and unrest. There were essentially two alternatives for the new Administration: First, to implement a 'holding operation' that would preserve the key features of the conservative-realist definition of the US national interest, but would also include tactical adjustments to a changed environment that demanded - at least temporarily - a more differentiated policy of global containment. The second option open to the Nixon-Kissinger team was to set in motion a process of re-definition of the prevailing notions of national interest and security, and of the objectives of US foreign policy, questioning the basic (conservative-realist) ideological presuppositions that had guided this policy until the Vietnam débacle, and also the rôle played by the 'liberal' ideological discourse as a legitimating device disconnected from US actions - particularly in the Third World.

The central thesis of the study is that substantial ideological innovation - not merely a change in tactics - was feasible and also necessary at the time in order to avoid a repetition of costly mistakes, to relate the US to emerging forces in world politics, and to restore an equilibrium between the ethical values that give cohesion to a free society and its actions abroad. Kissinger brought to office a conceptual framework that allowed him to impose significant coherence upon US foreign policy, but which also made it extremely difficult for him and Nixon to introduce the ideological innovations called for by the Vietnam experience.

In this study four themes intertwine: (1) a consideration of the nature and functions of ideology in politics; (2) a characterization of US foreign policy ideology; (3) a discussion of the problem of innovation in the field of foreign policy; (4) an analysis of Kissinger's political thought and the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy strategy. The conclusion is reached that under Nixon and Kissinger the conservative-realist aspect of US foreign policy ideology reached a higher point of political maturity and sophistication, without in any fundamental sense deviating from the assumptions about US aims and security interests that took America into Vietnam.

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'Not ideas, but material and ideal interests directly govern man's conduct. Yet very frequently the "world images" which have been created by "ideas" have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interests.'

Max Weber

(From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, edited by H.H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1967, pp 64-5)

'In any society the dominant groups are the ones with the most to hide about the way society works. Very often therefore truthful analyses are bound to have a critical ring, to seem like postures rather than objective statements... For all students of human society sympathy with the victims of historical processes and skepticism about the victors' claims provide essential safeguards against being taken in by the dominant mythology. A scholar who tries to be objective needs these feelings as part of his working equipment.'

Barrington Moore

(Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy, Allen Lane, London, 1967, p 523)

INTRODUCTION

Three kinds of factors can create the possibility for innovation in the realm of foreign policy-making. In the first place, external factors, that is to say, changes in the international context which may stimulate new directions in a country's answers to the challenges posed by its external environment. Secondly, domestic factors, having to do with internal developments and their repercussions on the State's external dealings and ambitions. And finally, ideological factors, that is, the way in which the perceptions and convictions of decision-makers affect the nature of a country's foreign policy responses. These are of course part of the domestic scene, but they should be considered separately for two reasons: on the one hand, no matter how acute international and domestic crises can be, they will translate themselves into an innovative foreign policy only through the prism of decisions made by those who are at a particular moment in charge of the State's destinies. On the other hand, even in conditions of relative stability in external and domestic affairs, a nation's leaders can - within certain limits - impose changes in the direction foreign policy is taking, and this can only be the result of new beliefs and ideas expressing themselves as decisions. The purpose of such changes can be either an attempt to mould reality according to one's wishes and interests, or to forestall in good time certain developments which could probably affect those interests in a negative way.

To be sure, the manner in which these factors interact, and their relative importance in specific circumstances, crucially depend upon the nature of each particular State. For a small power, with limited material and human resources and multiple dependencies on its external environment, the possibilities for innovation in 'normal' times are usually few. Paradoxically, the scope for creativity seems to be greater in periods of crisis, but in fact this is the time when choices are more severely constrained, and the alternatives less numerous. Change does take place, but because it must, not because it was decided that it should be so. For a superpower the situation is different. Except in extreme cases, when national survival may be at stake, crises

have a less demanding character, and the scope for creativity never ceases to be relatively broad. The intellectual challenge is therefore much greater than in the case of small states, for even though a particular crisis can be overcome with only secondary adjustments to the existing foreign policy paradigm, the problem remains whether this will avoid a repetition of similar and perhaps more severe challenges in the future, or whether there might not be a more efficient, less wasteful and less risky way of protecting certain interests and gaining certain objectives in the world arena. To put it differently, for a superpower which enjoys a privileged position in the world, it may be relevant to ask whether costly mistakes can be avoided and how, whether the ideology that guides its foreign policy is compatible with the values of its political system, and whether an altered perception of its interests and goals might not best serve its long-term prospects of surviving <u>without betraying its fundamental values</u>.

In the decade between 1965 and 1975 the United States found itself in the position of having to ask certain basic questions about its foreign policy. The impact of the Vietnam experience upon America's external relations and domestic politics was profound. A new era of strategic 'parity' with the USSR came into being; the limitations of military force as an instrument to contain revolutionary nationalism in the Third World were cruelly exposed; President Johnson's 'Great Society' could not get off the ground under the combined pressures of economic crisis, social protest and political unrest. But above all Vietnam originated a deep ideological crisis which shattered the American people's and leadership's self-images, and put into question the most basic beliefs on which their foreign policy rested. This crisis affected, on the one hand, the liberal ideology which had served as the legitimating instrument of US foreign policy both domestically and internationally; and, on the other hand, the fundamental conservative-realist ideology that had till then played the decisive role in the formulation and implementation of that policy. The Vietnam experience not only openly exposed the contradiction between the legitimating 'liberal' principles and the operational 'realist' assumptions, but also showed the limitations and dangers of a version of 'realism' that led to

humiliation abroad and endangered the democratic substratum of American domestic politics.

Thus in the late sixties and early seventies, when the first Nixon Administration held office, all the main conditions that make foreign policy innovation likely were present in an acute form: a combination of external and domestic crises coupled with widespread self-doubt and cultural unease. But for ideological innovation to take place something else was needed: the commitment of the new US leaders to a thoroughgoing revision of the ideological premises of US foreign policy; not merely the adoption of new tactics in the diplomatic and military fields but a transformation of the perceptions and beliefs which had made Vietnam possible. It is a key contention of this study that the conservative-realist ideology is founded upon a certain conception of politics, and that only by questioning this view of politics and its implications could a reformulation of American notions of security, national interests, and the ends of foreign policy take place.

The novelty of some of the key Nixon-Kissinger diplomatic moves has tended to obscure the essential continuity of the ideological premises of their foreign policy. The conceptual design, implementation and results of their strategy showed two things: first, that the Vietnam crisis mainly affected one aspect of the American leadership group's foreign policy ideology - the legitimating 'liberal' aspect; secondly, that a process of foreign policy innovation without ideological change is inherently flawed, and rather than transforming old policies it tends to reinforce them. In fact, under Nixon and Kissinger, the conservative-realist basis of American foreign policy ideology reached a higher point of political maturity and sophistication, without in any fundamental sense deviating from the presuppositions about US purposes and security interests that took America into Vietnam. The importance of the 'Kissinger period' lies precisely in Kissinger's attempt to conduct foreign policy from a higher level of ideological self-understanding within a conservative-realist framework. In his, and Nixon's hands, the defence of the international status quo became an extremely complex operation, demanding a high degree of tactical subtlety, without, however, transforming the ideological basis of a conservative foreign

policy design.

In this study four themes intertwine: first, a consideration of the nature and functions of ideology in politics; secondly, a characterization of US foreign policy ideology; thirdly, a discussion of the problem of innovation in the field of foreign policy; and finally, an analysis of Henry Kissinger's political thought and the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy strategy. My main concern is then ideological critique rather than policy analysis itself; this is why I have chosen three aspects of the Kissinger-Nixon foreign policy that seem to me particularly relevant for the stated themes of this work: relations with the USSR and China, the response toward Third World nationalism and revolution, and strategic nuclear policy. Other spheres of policy, such as alliance relations and international economic affairs, are thus not given any detailed consideration. I intend to show the connection between an ideology which dominates American thinking about international affairs - which I call 'conservative-realism' - and the foreign policies of the Nixon Administration. This will involve an analysis of both political 'realism' and conservatism, and a discussion of the function of liberalism in the American discourse on foreign policy. I have chosen the 'Kissinger period' as the subject-matter of my study because it throws into sharp relief the dilemmas between ideological conservatism and the pressures for innovation in the field of foreign policy. Kissinger brought to office a conceptual framework that allowed him to impose an unusual degree of coherence upon US foreign policy strategy, but which also made it impossible for him and Nixon to introduce the ideological innovations called for by the Vietnam experience.

I must admit, as a Latin American, that my purposes are not purely theoretical; that by studying the US foreign policy ideology I intend to find a clearer answer to two questions: first, what have been the roots of the American behaviour towards Latin America in the past ?; and secondly, what can we expect from the US in the future ? This accounts for what may be seen as an overconcentration on examples drawn from the history of US-Latin American relations in some sections of this work. I

believe that by analyzing ideas, and not only material interests, one can gain a more adequate perception of reality, for - as a great believer in the power of ideas once put it - '...soon or late, it is ideas, not vested interests, which are dangerous for good or evil.'[1]

1. J.M. Keynes, The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money, Macmillan, London, 1936, 384

CHAPTER 1

THE IDEOLOGICAL CRISIS OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

THE NATURE AND FUNCTIONS OF IDEOLOGY

The debate on the nature of ideology generally falls into two broad domains, namely ideology in knowledge and/or ideology in politics:

> With respect to the first area of inquiry the question is whether, and to what extent, man's knowledge is ideologically conditioned or distorted. With respect to the second area of inquiry the question is whether ideology is an essential feature of politics and if so what does it explain. In the first case 'ideology' is contrasted with 'truth', science and valid knowledge in general; whereas in the second case we are not concerned with the truth-value, but with the functional value, so to speak, of ideology.[1]

Mannheim, for example, argued that historical and political thought is determined by the socio-historical location of the thinker and the aspirations and ambitions of the group to which he belongs. Such thought is inherently value-laden, one-sided, 'distorted', and therefore false; and he calls all systems of historical-social-political thought 'ideologies' precisely because they represent a one-sided, socially-determined perspective of political reality.[2] This leads to Mannheim's well-known 'paradox': if all such perspectives are 'ideologies', an objective and valid social science is impossible, and Mannheim's own reflections on the historical process are self-refuting - for his perspective can claim no more objective validity than can other perspectives.[3]

Marx and Engels had argued that the class system structures a society's cultural system, and that in all societies human consciousness reflects concrete reality (although, they add, under the class system only as in a camera oscura, i.e. upside-

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1. G. Sartori, 'Politics, Ideology, and Belief Systems', American Political Science Review, Vol 63, 1969, 398
2. Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1966, 49-96, 237-80
3. W.A. Mullins, 'Truth and Ideology: Reflections on Mannheim's Paradox, History and Theory, Vol XVIII, No 2, 1979, 142-3

down and hence 'falsely'). In Mannheim's sociology of knowledge the Marxian notion of ideology was extended to implicate thought in general and not only 'false consciousness', with the consequence that all cogitation is said to be decisively coloured by our existentially determined 'world-view'.[1] The difficulties with this genetic and relativistic view of knowledge have led to an application of the notion of ideology in politics which emphasizes its functional value, in contrast to its 'truth' content:

> to say that ideologies legitimate political practices is to say that they are defined not by form or content, but by their function in legitimating or delegitimating social practices. It is not the specific beliefs about race in Nazism or about God in religions, nor the truth or falsity of such beliefs which make them ideological but the practical use to which they are put.[2]

According to this perspective, therefore, the ways in which political theorists' ideas in fact function in the world should be the principal concern in the study of ideologies. Lenin, in a significant departure from Marx's usage, emphasized this dimension of ideology. His originality lay not so much in his analysis of the epistemological foundations of Marxism, nor in his use of Marxism as a legitimating tool (at least not until the revolution succeeded), but in his conception of ideology as a mobilizing belief system, thus implicating a meaning which is mainly voluntaristic and action-oriented, in contrast to Marx's (and Mannheim's) rather passive imagery of a 'prism' or 'lens' through which our perceptions of the world pass.[3] Lenin 'operationalized' Marxism as a practical instrument for political action, as a specific response to a set of socio-historical conditions, and as a 'weapon' in the struggle for power. In the evolution of Marxism, 'Leninism' represented a step in the direction of making theory serve the purposes of practical politics.

The confusion surrounding discussions about ideology in politics are to a large extent the result of the inability

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1. W. Carlsnaes, 'Can Perceptions be Ideological ?' Cooperation and Conflict, Vol XVI, No 3, Sep 1981, 184
2. I. Shapiro, 'Realism in the Study of the History of Ideas', History of Political Thought, Vol III, No 3, Nov 1982, 571
3. W. Carlsnaes, The Concept of Ideology and Political Analysis, Greenwood, Westport, 1981, Ch 3

to distinguish between the different functions of political ideology: the explanatory function, the instrumental function - as a guide to action - and the legitimative function. The crucial point to bear in mind is that, even though ideology - unlike philosophy and science - denotes sets of ideas not primarily conceived for cognitive purposes, it is not unrelated to empirically ascertainable facts, or, to use Seliger's words, there is a 'necessary relatedness of ideological argumentation to facts'.[1] The dogmatic core of the Marxian theory of ideology, namely the view that in virtue of its being conditioned by socio-economic relations the consciousness of men is 'false consciousness', and Mannheim's epistemological relativism both preclude the very possibility of ideologies being capable of providing factual and objective insights. This radical rejection of the explanatory power of ideologies went hand in hand - in Marx's and Mannheim's cases - with an acute awareness of the use of distortion as a tool of political domination and control. But no political belief system of any importance consists wholly of conscious or unconscious lies and deceptions, for, as Lane puts it, 'total incongruence between ideology and experience extinguishes a social movement'.[2] To be effective, ideologies must be fitted to the characteristics of their potential audiences:

> While the adaptation serves the purposes of making the audience adopt beliefs and attitudes which it might not have adopted otherwise, this objective can be achieved only if the ideas put before an audience correspond with a minimal number of attested and attestable facts.[3]

In short, political ideologies contain an explanation of events, and this function limits their possibility of distorting 'reality' to an extent that is totally incongruous with what the ideology says about it; ideologies should therefore be interpreted not only as integrated sets of ideas and political beliefs but also to a certain extent as persuasive beliefs seeking to persuade and guide in areas where 'truth' is difficult to establish.

Ideologies, however, are not only - or even mainly -

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1. M. Seliger, Ideology and Politics, Allen & Unwin, London, 1976, 121
2. R.E. Lane, Political Ideology. Why the American Common Man Believes What He Does, The Free Press, New York, 1962, 426
3. Seliger, 159

concerned with the explanation of a given situation; the difference between political philosophy and ideology stems from the fact that political philosophies do not serve political action directly, or at any rate not nearly to the same degree as do ideologies. Their more pronounced detachment from immediate political action provides greater scope for normative autonomy and empirical objectivity; and though the difference of degree cannot always be precisely measured, it is nevertheless demonstrably real, as a comparison of such works as, for example, Marx's Das Kapital and his (and Engels') Communist Manifesto can easily show. To put it differently, ideology, as it were, transposes social and political philosophy into the 'key' appropriate for action and the mobilization of elite and popular support.[1] It is the attempt of ideologies to so construe political situations as to make it possible to act purposively within them that accounts both for their practical relevance and for the intensity with which, once accepted, they are commonly held.

Ideologies act as guides to action, and this practical relevance includes the function of providing legitimacy to political action, that is to say, of justifying it in the light of a set of normative views on the nature, purposes and probable consequences of certain political practices and power relationships. The legitimative function is correlative to the exercise of political domination and authority: it provides a regime, or an elite, with supporting social conditions for effective policy. In this capacity, legitimation is needed both for domestic and foreign policy. It is precisely at this level - that of the legitimative function - that the deliberate or unconscious ideological distortion of reality usually becomes more accentuated, as dominant groups and established regimes try to present power relationships or specific policies in a better image than perhaps they deserve when considered from the vantage point of those who are either excluded from the power structure or affected by its policies. As Mannheim put it, the concept of

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1. Seliger, 115, 120. Plamenatz makes this point thus: 'For beliefs to be ideological...they must be shared by a group of people, they must concern matters important to the group, and must be in some way functional in relation to it: they must serve to hold it together or to justify activities and attitudes characteristic of its members.' (J. Plamenatz, Ideology, Pall Mall, London, 1970, 27)

ideology

> reflects the one discovery which emerged from political conflict, namely, that ruling groups can in their thinking become so intensely interest-bound to a situation that they are simply no longer able to see certain facts which would undermine their sense of domination. There is implicit in the word 'ideology' the insight that in certain situations the collective unconscious of certain groups obscures the real condition of society both to itself and to others and thereby stabilizes it.[1]

The wider the gap between what is proclaimed and what is actually done, between ideological principles and political reality, the more the effect of ideology - as an instrument of legitimation - will be to obscure rather than reveal the true facts about the nature of power relationships and the consequences of state policies.

Initially, the avowed intention of Marxism was to unmask the distortions which covered the 'true face' of capitalist society. As the official ideology of the Soviet regime, however, Marxism is used as a legitimative tool to mask the control of the Party (which becomes 'the servant of the people') and the domination of other countries (in the name of 'proletarian internationalism'). What was first an instrument for the unveiling of illusions became - impelled by the need to justify power relationships - a means to adorn domination with an aura of legitimacy in an attempt to stabilize the existing structure by sanctifying it in the eyes of the ruled. The explanatory function of ideologies can sow the seeds of revolution;[2] their legitimative function, on the other hand, is a tool of stability, not change.

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1. Mannheim, 36

2. Burke, who harboured fewer illusions than most about the reality of social processes, clearly recognized both that ideologies are the 'cement' that tie societies together, and that they can act as 'solvents' of established structures. Thus he traced the roots of the revolution in France to the unveiling of illusions: 'But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded... All the pleasing illusions, which made power gentle and obedience liberal, which harmonized the different shades of life...are to be dissolved by this new conquering empire of light and reason.' (E. Burke, Works, Vol II, London, 1897, 348-9. Quoted in R. Eccleshall, 'English Conservatism as Ideology', Political Studies, Vol XXV, No 1, 1977, 66) (Emphasis mine)

To be sure, not all political ideologies have the same degree of internal coherence or capacity to perform the three functions already mentioned that, for instance, Marxism has. In fact, Marxism is possibly the most 'developed' political ideology of our times. It rests on a considerable body of theoretical work; it has been successfully used for the practical tasks of revolution in several countries, and it functions as the legitimative doctrinal 'cement' of all communist regimes. Fascism and National-Socialism, on the other hand, were conceived by Mussolini and Hitler essentially as instruments for popular mobilization and the conquest of power; the theoretical 'understanding' of reality was from the beginning subordinated to the demands of power. The Fascist mixture of populism, racism and nationalism, however, proved remarkably successful - in the right conditions - in generating long-term support from great numbers of people in both Italy and Germany. Fascism and National-Socialism, like Marxism, did what a political ideology does: they posited and justified a distinct conception of society, laying down the ways and means of establishing and preserving it through a specific political system.

On the basis of our discussion so far, an ideology can be defined, following Seliger, as a belief system 'designed to serve on a relatively permanent basis a group of people to justify ...the legitimacy of the...prescriptions which are to ensure concerted action for the preservation, reform, destruction or reconstruction of a given order'.[1] According to this basic definition of ideology, politics is inseparable from it, since all political action is in one way or another aimed at one of these objectives; also, this definition brings out the way in which something worth calling 'ideology' is common to <u>all</u> political belief systems.

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1. Seliger, 120

IDEOLOGY AND FOREIGN POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES

The role of ideology as a factor affecting the perceptions of foreign policy decision-makers has been extensively analyzed and used for different theoretical aims. It has been argued that

> Ideologies not only establish foreign policy goals, evaluative criteria, and justifications for actions, but have important effects in perceptual processes as well... [An ideology] establishes the intellectual framework through which policy makers observe reality. All messages and cues from the external environment are given meaning, or interpreted, within the categories, predictions, and definitions provided by doctrines comprising the ideology.[1]

According to this view, ideologies act as 'screens' or 'prisms' through which elite perceptions of the political environment are 'filtered'. These images of the world constitute key inputs of a foreign policy system, for decision-makers act in accordance with their perceptions of reality, not in response to reality itself.[2] It is, of course, almost a truism to assert that foreign policy decisions generally cannot be adequately explained or predicted without reference to the thought processes, 'operational codes' or 'cognitive maps' of the individuals participating in the decisions.[3] This cognitive behavioural view of ideology, however, which sees it as essentially a <u>cognitive</u> phenomenon affecting our view of the world outside our minds, should be complemented by a conception defined in terms of <u>purposive</u> or <u>intentional</u> behaviour, that is to say, with reference to the concept of action.[4] Thus ideology should not merely be seen as a cognitive trait of the individual mind, but also as a specific

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1. K.J. Holsti, <u>International Politics</u>, Prentice-Hall, London, 1974, 366
2. M. Brecher et al, 'A Framework for Research in Foreign Policy Behaviour', <u>Journal of Conflict Resolution</u>, Vol 13, 1969, 86; M. Brecher, <u>Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy</u>, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, 6-7
3. On the concepts of 'Operational Code' and 'Cognitive Map' see D. Heradstveit & O. Narvesen, 'Psychological Constraints on Decision-Making. A Discussion of Cognitive Approaches: Operational Code and Cognitive Map', <u>Cooperation and Conflict</u>, Vol XIII, 1978, 77-92
4. W. Carlsnaes, 'Can Perceptions be Ideological ?' 184

kind of intellectual-political product, a manifest system of purposive thought defined in terms of action-oriented goals. This notion of ideology, which emphasizes its explicit political function, is particularly important in the field of foreign policy, where the demands to legitimate domestically the external actions of the state frequently contribute to the intentional distortion of reality through ideological commitments.

As Morgenthau has put it, the maker of foreign policy 'cannot help being also an ideologue, that is, a falsifier of foreign policy', for 'the statesman who must try to make his foreign policies palatable to opinion at home and abroad is compelled to make them appear as something different than they actually are'.[1] Given this basic fact of international politics, it becomes crucially important to distinguish between what may usefully be called the 'official' foreign policy ideology of a state - which is mainly an instrument of legitimation - and its 'fundamental' ideology - which explains reality 'for insiders', as distinct from domestic opinion at large, and serves as a guide to action. The first aspect of ideology can be defined as 'a system of normative and empirical beliefs about the international system and the role of one's country in that system, as declared in public by the official decision-makers of that country';[2] the 'fundamental' dimension of ideology, on the other hand, is not concerned with justification or manipulation of public attitudes, but with the explanation of reality - as seen from a certain perspective - and the determination of the state's goals and methods of foreign policy in accordance with that political perspective.

No study of the impact of ideology on foreign policy could get anywhere without first distinguishing between these two aspects of ideology. And even though this distinction might seem to be a perfectly straightforward tool of analysis in international politics, the fact - which is not difficult to

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1. H.J. Morgenthau, The Impasse of American Foreign Policy, The University of Chicago Press, 1962, 5. K.W. Thompson also warned of the dangers of 'taking America at its word', thus running the risk of 'denouncing words that obscure realistic decisions or of confounding claims with intentions and results.' See Political Realism and the Crisis of World Politics, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1960, 127
2. K. Brodin, 'Belief Systems, Doctrines, and Foreign Policy', Cooperation and Conflict, Vol VII, 1972, 104

corroborate - is that it is almost completely absent from all but a few of the most important analyses of United States' foreign policy. The problem has two sides: on the one hand, the majority of scholars and 'practitioners' who discuss American policies and ideology do not usually distinguish between what is said and what is done, or between what is publicly asserted and what is revealed by documentation not for public or mass consumption. On the other hand, what I call the 'fundamental' ideology of American foreign policy has received only scant and superficial attention even from 'radical' critics, who concentrate on pointing out the gap between the official pronouncements and the actual deeds of the US government, but who do not make the effort to assess the philosophical roots and implications of this ideology.[1] Even so-called 'realist' critics, such as Morgenthau and Kennan, have not always been able to go beyond the description of foreign policy, as it is enunciated and assumed by decision-makers and the public, to the analysis of its 'fundamental' ideological presuppositions and its practical implementation. Thus Morgenthau, in 1962, recognized that

> The United States has been particularly prone to deceiving itself about the true nature of its foreign policy. This special propensity to self-deception results from two factors: the mental picture the American mind has painted of the peculiar qualities of American foreign policy in contrast to the foreign policy pursued by other nations, and the actual character of American foreign policy, especially in the Western hemisphere.[2]

Only two years later, however, he was attacking those critics who question the commonly-held view among apologists of American power that the United States is not guided in its external relations by principles of self-interest but rather by abstract moral principles: the 'liberal' principles of freedom, self-determination, equality and democracy. The US, argued Morgenthau, has a 'transcendent purpose', namely 'the establishment of equality and freedom in America', and indeed throughout the world,

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1. Possibly the most impressive of these 'radical' critics is Noam Chomsky, whose demolition work of the most characteristic self-delusions of US official foreign policy ideology has been expounded in a continuous stream of books and articles. See, for example, Towards a New Cold War, Sinclair Browne, London, 1982

2. Morgenthau, 5-6

since 'the arena within which the United States must defend and promote its purpose has become world-wide'. His basic assumption - at least in this essay - is that US foreign policy is one of benevolence - misplaced benevolence, sometimes.[1]

Examples of the confusion between the 'official' and the 'fundamental' ideology of American foreign policy could be multiplied, and it is to say the least worrying to corroborate the - generally - low quality of the scholarly works covering this key area of US politics. Here are a few illustrative cases: The respected historian Norman Graebner, in his well-known study, Cold War Diplomacy: 1945-60, argues that the United States is not an 'aggressive, imperialist power', as is demonstrated by the many 'references to principle' in its 'diplomatic language'. The 'traditional American dilemma' lies in the delusion that, 'given the energy and determination of its antagonists', nevertheless 'the nation was always assured that it could anticipate the eventual collapse of its enemies and the creation of the illusive world of justice and freedom'. In his view, 'certainly all fundamental American relations with the USSR and mainland China after 1950 were anchored to that assumption'. But this 'American idealism', this foreign policy guided by the 'Wilsonian principles of peace and self-determination', the 'selfless search for order in world affairs' has not been able to 'sustain the gratitude of a troubled world'.[2] And, according to Michael

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1. See H.J. Morgenthau, The Purpose of American Politics, University Press of America, Washington, 1982, 33-4. This theme of the 'benevolence' of American purposes is reiterated to the point of exhaustion in the scholarly literature on the subject. Thus, for instance, Kenneth Thompson, another of the so-called 'realist' critics, wrote that '[the US] engaged in the world struggle [World War II] not selfishly or for political advantage but in order that conflict might cease once and for all and that the evil men who had been responsible might be destroyed.', 68. This, of course, is totally contradicted by the extensively documented US planning for the exercise of hegemonial power in the postwar period. See L.H. Shoup, 'Shaping the Postwar World', Insurgent Sociologist, Vol 5, No 3, Spring 1975; also, G. Kolko, The Politics of War, Random House, New York, 1968

2. Norman Graebner, Cold War Diplomacy: 1945-60, D. Van Nostrand, New York, 1962, 7-11, 128-32. Another interesting example of the inability to distinguish between 'diplomatic language' and the realities of foreign policy can be found in Dexter Perkins' book, Foreign Policy and the American Spirit, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1957, 13

Donelan, a British scholar, the Cold War was caused by the Soviets' 'crude rebuffs to American friendliness' and 'blatant affronts to Western opinion as a whole', which began a 'spirit of hostility which grew gradually into the East-West conflict'. It is not necessary to become a fully-fledged 'Cold War revisionist' to know that the story was more complicated than this; Donelan, however, went on to argue - in a book published in 1963, only one year after the Cuban missile crisis and after almost four years of unremitting US hostility to Castro's initially independent revolution - that the US 'has been a revolutionary power in its attempts to introduce democracy into international relations'.[1] The problem in Donelan's case is not that he forgets that 'However much Americans may like to speak of the role of the United States in world affairs in ideological terms, the basis of United States policy has been the pursuit of security and other conventional interests',[2] but that he unquestioningly accepts all the platitudes about 'Wilsonian idealism', the US as a 'reluctant' superpower', about the Monroe Doctrine being based on 'the principle of non-interference in the affairs of the other [Latin American] republics', and about power being 'an idea troublesome to the American conscience', connected as it is 'with the wars and tyrannies of the unregenerate outside world'.[3] The message is basically the same: the US is more 'moral' than other nations; the US goes to war solely to expand freedom and democracy, and the US only fights after being attacked, to defend itself and not for aggression against others.

It would of course take me too far afield to discuss the history of American foreign relations before the Cold War era. For purposes of ideological clarification, however, it is important to consider the myth of an 'age of innocence' in American external affairs, when - as Robert Osgood argues - 'the American people were ignorant of the political and strategic grounds of their survival, because they were innocent of the real limits upon the efficacy of impulse and moral sentiment in international relations', an age when 'the omniscience and

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1. M. Donelan, The Ideas of American Foreign Policy, Chapman & Hall, London, 1963, 61
2. ibid
3. ibid, 13, 25

saintliness of America's international outlook were not tested by the harsh imperatives of survival', and Americans 'drifted about aimlessly, without chart and compass, upon the strange currents of international politics'.[1] This extremely common and superficial view, according to which US foreign policy 'is mired with illusion', and produces not calculated and deliberate policies, but moral impulses that reflect little of the reality of international life,[2] has never in fact corresponded with reality, not even during the heyday of Wilsonian 'utopianism'. What has remained constant in American foreign policy, however, is a verbal strategy that disclaims any selfish interest on the part of the United States in its external relations and that presents interventionist policies as the produce of 'moral purposes'. As President Wilson put it in a 1914 speech about US pressures upon Mexican President Huerta - pressures which culminated in a military invasion on April 22 of that year:

> The situation [in Mexico] is intolerable, and requires the strong guiding hand of the great Nation of this continent that, by every appeal of right and justice, and the love for order, and the hope for peace and prosperity, must assist these...people back into the paths of quiet and prosperity. We have an object lesson to give to the rest of the world...that this nation rises superior to considerations of added power and scorns an opportunity for territorial aggrandizement...with no other idea than the idea and the ideal of helping them compose their differences, starting them on the road to continued peace...and leaving them to work out their own destiny, <u>but watching them narrowly and insisting that they shall take help when help is needed</u>.

It was important, he commented - in a phrase reminiscent of Nixon's and Kissinger's later views on Allende's accession to power in Chile - 'to teach the South American Republics to elect good men.'[3] The proposition that the US was not interested in

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1. R.E. Osgood, <u>Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations</u>, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1969, 430-1

2. E. Stillman & W. Pfaff, <u>Power and Impotence: the Failure of America's Foreign Policy</u>, Random House, New York, 1966, 15, 74

3. Quoted by E. Haley, <u>Revolution and Intervention: The Diplomacy of Taft and Wilson with Mexico: 1910-1917</u>, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1970, 138-9 (emphasis added)

'territorial aggrandizement' must have sounded ironic to the Mexicans, who had already lost great tracts of land to the US in what are now the states of California and Texas. This was not the first, nor would it be the last time that the US government would intervene in the affairs of other societies driven by 'moral impulses', 'drifting aimlessly, without chart and compass'.

One would expect outright propagandists and apologists to argue - as former Ambassador Charles Bohlen, for instance, has done - that 'one of the difficulties of explaining [American foreign policy]...is that our policy is not rooted in any national material interest of the United States, as most foreign policies of other countries in the past have been';[1] but the situation appears in a different light when even scholars of the intellectual stature of Stanley Hoffmann try to explain the ideological nature of US foreign policy with the use of pseudo-psychological categories such as 'the Wilsonian syndrome', which leads American foreign policy-makers to 'an oscillation from quietism to activism' to a permanent search for the 'golden mean', and the 'tension' in the 'American style' between 'the instinct of violence' and 'the drive for harmony'.[2] The process that leads scholars to confuse ideological pronouncements - intended for legitimation purposes - with the realities of foreign policy, and to lose sight of the gap between the 'official' and the 'fundamental' aspects of foreign policy ideology is not necessarily a product of intellectual dishonesty. In most cases, it is partly the result of self-deception, of the difficulty of asking about one's own society unpleasant questions whose answers might be too painful to admit. There is also the tendency, quite common among US scholars, to attribute to one's own government - if it is domestically 'satisfactory' - motivations guided by the highest ideals, to refer to the 'moral concern' that is 'a typical

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1. C. Bohlen, The Transformation of American Foreign Policy, W.W. Norton, New York, 1969, 95-6

2. S. Hoffmann, Gulliver's Troubles, or the Setting of American Foreign Policy, MacGraw Hill, New York, 1968, 91, 181, 191. For another, less valuable, example in this line of 'explanation', see R. Dalleck, The American Style of Foreign Policy. Cultural Politics and Foreign Affairs, Knopf, New York, 1983, xii-xiii, 260-1, 266-7

expression of the American spirit'.[1] I am **persuaded**, however, that in the American case the process of ideological self-deception of scholars, their inability to disentangle rhetoric from reality, is also the result of the overwhelming predominance in the literature on US foreign policy of works which unquestioningly accept the 'official' ideological version of the nature and impact of America's foreign involvement.[2]

A fascinating example of this difficulty in differentiating between 'official' and 'fundamental' ideology is provided by Richard Falk, considered to be a <u>critic</u> of American policies, and it deserves extensive quotation. In a discussion on Vietnam and American intervention he had this to say on the problem of ideological 'deception':

> Both the debate on the 'lessons of Vietnam' and my analysis of it proceed on the assumption that there is a good faith connection between the persuasiveness of alternative lines of public justification and the course of governmental policy. Unfortunately...I have become increasingly skeptical about this connection. <u>In my judgement, the external debate may even function as a mystification, obscuring the real basis of national policy</u>; that is, the explication of a rationale may serve to confuse and distract, rather than to enlighten public opinion.

He asks why it is that 'the real basis of policy must remain obscure and therefore excluded...from explicit mention', and

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1. See J. Chace, 'How Moral Can We Get ?', <u>New York Times Magazine</u>, May 22, 1977. And in a study on the 'verbal strategies' of the US and the USSR, when trying to justify their respective interventions in Latin America or Eastern Europe, Franck and Weisband carefully emphasize that 'We do not assert that what we did in relation to our small neighbours [Guatemala in 1954, Cuba between 1901 and 1961, and the Dominican Republic in 1965] is as bad as what the Russians did in relation to theirs', though they do not even try to explain why. See T.M. Franck & E. Weisband, <u>World Politics. Verbal Strategy Among the Superpowers</u>, Oxford University Press, New York, 1971, viii

2. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule, especially in the 'revisionist' literature on the origins of the Cold War; these mainly historical works, however, do not deal directly with the subject of this study; their purpose, rather, is to 'set the record straight' as far as certain key post-war events are concerned. See W. Appleman Williams, <u>The Tragedy of American Diplomacy</u>, Dell, New York, 1978; J. & G. Kolko, <u>The Limits of Power</u>, Harper & Row, New York, 1972

says that, even though 'this is a complicated question', it would appear that 'policy-makers are implementing a set of policies that contradict popularly held attitudes about why America uses military power in foreign affairs'. After this tortuous detour through what for Falk - an honest and creative scholar - appeared as an intellectual 'revelation', he arrived at the conclusion that 'the outcome of the debate [on the 'lessons' of Vietnam] will depend on considerations other than degree of evidence and persuasiveness', for 'the policy debate in a puppet show of sorts'.[1]

It would be a mistake to assume that, because it is a democratic society, the needs for ideological legitimation of state action in the United States are less pressing than in a totalitarian society such as the Soviet Union. The contrast between the predominant American self-image - the product of a political culture which exalts the moral worthiness of 'the first new nation', a land 'of limitless opportunity', 'the Rome and Athens of the Western world'[2] - and the actual behaviour of the US government abroad has been and still is very striking. The gap between the view, constantly reiterated by American decision-makers and scholars, that US foreign policy is characterized by its 'pacific spirit'[3] and the policies of successive American administrations[4] is so wide, that it creates enormous legitimation demands, in particular in a democratic society where the possibility of dissent is still open. Tucker's view that

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1. R. Falk, A Global Approach to National Policy, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1975, 59-61 (emphasis mine)
2. These last are Morgenthau's words. See Purpose of American Politics, 5. On the 'ordinary US citizen's self-image' see Lane, 145-61, 321-80, 439-77
3. Perkins, 13
4. See the catalogue, compiled by B. Blechman and others, of the US government's systematic use of force as an instrument of policy, Force Without War: US Armed Forces as a Political Instrument, The Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, 1978. On the basis of the evidence analyzed by the authors of this book - who list more than 200 incidents in which the US government has used force as a basic component of policy [in the post-war period] - it is difficult not to agree with Chomsky's characterization of the US as 'the world's most violent power' (Chomsky, 111). The authors conclude that 'there is little reason to expect a...decline of this frequency' in coming years, 533

'America has behaved very much as other great nations have behaved', and that 'if there is a quality unique to American diplomacy it consists in the greater than usual disparity between ideals professed and behaviour',[1] contains the explanation for the paradox of a profoundly conservative foreign policy that is commonly characterized - both by defenders and critics - as 'liberal'.

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1. R.W. Tucker, The Radical Left and American Foreign Policy, Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1971, 148

LIBERALISM, VIETNAM, AND IDEOLOGICAL LEGITIMATION

Political legitimacy has been defined as 'a function of a system's ability to persuade members of its own appropriateness. The flow is from leaders to followers. Leaders lay down rules, promulgate policies and disseminate symbols which tell followers how and what they should do and feel.'[1] The acquisition and maintenance of legitimacy can be considered a fundamental requirement of any political regime, for 'The state is not force alone. It depends upon the credulity of man quite as much as upon his docility. Its aim is not merely to make him obey, but also to make him want to obey.'[2] The process of ideological legitimation is continuous and extends to any political system beyond purely coercive management. The advantages are easy to appreciate, for legitimacy is more 'cost-effective' than force, and, unlike force, it generates more solid and essentially long-term support.[3] The ultimate end of the legitimation process is to protect political authority, by investing state policies with a normative component. It is therefore crucial for both authoritarian and democratic states, despite their differences in methods and varieties in the use of force. While both guidance and demands arise domestically in each political system, the range of acts supported by legitimation must also account for the state's external activities:

> Legitimation consequently makes it necessary to construct, present, and defend...a prevailing image of the international situation. The structure of that image is bound closely to the foreign policy function, Nevertheless,

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1. J. Shaar, 'Legitimacy in the Modern State', in P. Green & S. Levinson (eds), Power and Community, Pantheon, New York, 1970, 285

2. H.L. Mencken, Minority Report, Knopf, New York, 1956, 217-8

3. See B. Trout, 'Rhetoric Revisited. Political Legitimation and the Cold War', International Studies Quarterly, Vol 19, No 3, September 1975, 252-3. It was Hobbes who first emphasized that the identity of the political is in large measure a product of beliefs, almost - in Wolin's words - 'an act of faith'. This is what Hobbes meant by the 'artificial' character of the political order and why he insisted that in every political system 'the people' really ruled, or, as Hume put it, 'It is...on opinion only that government is founded.' (See Sheldon Wolin, Politics and Vision, Little, Brown Co., Boston, 1960, 289)

> while acting in reference to the international situation, the foreign policy organization must simultaneously maintain a legitimative framework compatible with domestic affairs. Legitimative content in foreign policy is then an essential ingredient.[1]

With the changes in the power relationships brought about by World War II, and in the uncertain international conditions prevailing at the time, both the US and the USSR had to deal with complex legitimation demands in the face of new challenges. The situation was particularly difficult for the US. Prior to that conflict, the US had not been an 'isolated' but a 'satisfied' power; it had intervened forcefully abroad (especially in the Western hemisphere) whenever its perceived interests dictated it, but it had not yet developed the global role that the defeat of Germany and Japan, and the consequent emergence of Soviet power, now thrust upon it. From then on American policy-makers would seek security through global involvement in defence of a privileged political, economic and military position, and of an international status quo under assault by the forces of social revolution, decolonization and Third World nationalism. In other words, the US, which had traditionally tried to project the image of a 'liberal' and 'democratic' nation whose foreign policy did not partake of the egoism of ordinary diplomacy, now became the world's most important conservative power. As stated with absolute clarity in a 'Top Secret' document of February 24 1948, the crucial fact determining American foreign policy in the post-war period was that 'We [the US] have about 50% of the world's wealth but only 6.3% of its population...Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without possible detriment to our national security.[2]

This situation created unprecedented legitimation demands for the American political system, especially with regard to foreign policy, and was the root-cause of the permanent

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1. Trout, 261
2. T.H. Etzold & J.L. Gaddis (eds), Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950, Columbia University Press, New York, 1978, 226-7 (emphasis mine). As Brodie has put it, until World War II the US enjoyed a 'surplus of security'; its relative 'isolationism' was the result of a conscious political choice, not the product of 'political innocence'. B. Brodie, War and Politics, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1973, 118

tension between the 'liberal' political message and the conservative strategy of the US government abroad. This divergence also gave rise to profound theoretical confusions which still persist, due to the seeming inability of a majority of American (and other Western) authors to understand the nature of the process of ideological legitimation.[1] The Cold War highlighted the need for ideological legitimacy both for the Soviet and American regimes. A policy of global involvement required strong political support at home, which was gained through 'an interpretive framework based upon an ideological view of international affairs - the global assault of the "totalitarian" forces against the forces of "freedom" - calculated to command immediately the maximum public support.'[2] The theme 'Communism versus Democracy' became the basic component of 'official' US foreign policy ideology, playing a key role which now emphasized more than ever the 'liberal' character of American intentions, purposes, and methods.

The confusion produced by the inability to distinguish

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1. An interesting exception is provided by Franck & Weisband, who argue that, as the Soviets 'were able to quote [the US government] verbatim to justify their actions [in Czechoslovakia in 1968]', this should cause a 're-examination of our rhetoric' (not of US interventionist policies in Latin America); what is needed, in other words, 'is not a radical shift in actual conduct but a [new] formulation by each state of its verbal behaviour...', 9, 159 (emphasis mine)
2. R.M. Freeland, The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism, Knopf, New York, 1972, 9. It should be emphasized that the demands of the legitimation process can lead to political commitments that then become a hindrance to, rather than a tool of, politics; in this kind of situation, as Kissinger points out, 'the symbolic aspect of foreign policy begins to overshadow the substantive component'. (See H.A. Kissinger, American Foreign Policy, Third Edition, Norton, New York, 1977, 97). The rhetorical radicalism of the Cold War confrontation, for example, has tended to obscure the fact that both American and Soviet leaders were privately not so firmly convinced about the real dangers of open warfare between their two countries, and were possibly more prepared than they dared to admit publicly to reach some sort of accommodation. See Trout, 265-7. On the American side's position, Etzold & Gaddis, 52, 61, 64, 69-70, 96, 179, 189. These documents, it should be pointed out, totally contradict Graebner's assertion - repeatedly stated in American studies on the 'origins of the Cold War' - that 'The central fact in the country's response to the Soviet challenge was the absence of any clearly defined body of objectives that had some relationship to American capability or even genuine intention.', 9

between different functions of ideology has been enormous. On the one hand, apologists of the aims and methods of US foreign policy argue that the patterns exhibited by the US in its foreign relations are an expression of the 'liberal political faith' and can be characterized as 'liberal interventionism': 'calculated to safeguard or promote the goals and values integral to the American way of life, as embraced specifically by the mission of projecting democracy abroad and uplifting the condition of the human race'.[1] On the other hand, a significant number of critics of US policies also tend to call themselves 'liberals' and they accept the conventional views about the uniqueness of American ideals and intellectual premises about world politics, based on a reverence for 'abstract' and 'selfless' moral principles and a belief that international society can be successfully founded upon moral and legal norms. They point out, however, that with the onset of the Cold War the US became an unwilling but inevitable contestant in an ideological struggle, and lost completely the ability to define and redefine interests and to differentiate between them.[2] American idealism entered into a 'messianic phase'; the US was 'beguiled' into an expansionist cause 'which reached its disastrous climax in Vietnam'.[3] In other words, these critics, who include so-called 'realists' such as Niebuhr and Morgenthau in some of their works, accept without question the view that US global interventionism is the product of 'good intentions' that have become corrupted in their application because they are divorced from a sober appraisal of political realities, and that there has been an almost complete lack of selfish national interest in the implementation of American foreign policy. It is therefore not surprising, given the basic accord of apologists and critics alike on the fundamentally 'benevolent' nature of US foreign policy, that both sides frequently draw the conclusion that the US's post-war expansion in

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1. Cecil V. Crabb, Jr, Policy-Makers and Critics. Conflicting Theories of American Foreign Policy, Praeger, New York, 1976, 36
2. See S. Kirby, 'National Interest versus Ideology in American Diplomacy', in R. Benewick, R.N. Benki and B. Parekh (eds), Knowledge and Belief in Politics. The Problem of Ideology, Allen & Unwin, London, 1973, 231-4
3. A. Schlesinger, Jr, The Bitter Heritage: Vietnam and American Democracy 1941-1966, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1967, 41, 43

general, and the Vietnam crisis in particular, have been the result of the primacy of the 'liberal' ideological commitment in formulating and implementing US foreign policy.[1] No wonder, then, that - as far as the field of scholarly analysis of US foreign policy is concerned - 'everybody'- as Horowitz puts it - 'is a liberal', and the interesting question is 'how the triumph of liberalism took place so thoroughly'.[2]

The answer, of course, lies in the logic of the ideological legitimation needs of an interventionist and militarized foreign policy in a democratic society.[3] Thus, when Kirby, for example, writes that the disparity between the rhetoric and the reality of US foreign policy is 'most odd', for 'an urge for domination and aggrandizement is fulfilled only by its proclamation and not by its denial', and that 'one would have expected from successive [American] administrations enthusiasm

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1. See Stillman & Pfaff, 171, 177; Schlesinger, 72

2. I.L. Horowitz, Ideology and Utopia in the United States, 1956-1976, Oxford University Press, New York, 1977, 139. The theoretical confusion created by the systematic efforts by policy-makers and scholars to characterize US foreign policy as 'liberal' has led to convoluted attempts to establish totally arbitrary differences between, on the one hand, 'idealistic interventionist liberalism', and, on the other hand, a 'conservative liberalism', without much care for the effects of such superficiality on the study of political theories. See E. Weisland, The Ideology of American Foreign Policy: A Paradigm of Lockean Liberalism, SAGE Professional Papers in International Studies, SAGE Publications, Beverly Hills, 1973, Vol 2, No 16, 50. The difficulty that Weisland is trying to overcome is, of course, the disparity between the claim of the 'liberals' of being nearly always in favour of change vis-à-vis the status quo and the conservative reality of US foreign policy

3. It is not my purpose to analyze the relationship between the liberal ideology and American domestic politics. It may be useful, however, to reproduce here the following words by C.W. Mills, 'Liberalism, as a set of ideals, is still viable, and even compelling to Western men. That is one reason why it has become a common denominator of American political rhetoric; but there is another reason. The ideals of liberalism have been divorced from any realities of modern social structure that might serve as the means of their realization...The detachment of liberalism from the facts of a going society make it an excellent mask for those who do not, cannot, or will not do what would have to be done to realize its ideals.' 'Liberal Values in the Modern World', in Power Politics and People: The Collected Essays of C. Wright Mills (edited by I.L. Horowitz), Oxford University Press, New York, 1963, 189 (emphasis mine)

rather than the disquiet and embarrassment that has greeted the..."discovery" of an American Empire',[1] he compounds the theoretical mistake of failing to understand the legitimative function of ideology with the historical error of not seeing that imperial domination has traditionally been presented by its ideologists under the guise of a 'liberating' force, acting in the interests of civilization, 'liberal' freedoms or socialist equality.

As I pointed out earlier, it is only by getting through the ideological smoke screen of 'liberalism' - used as a legitimative tool - that any sense can be made of the 'fundamental' - as opposed to the 'official' - ideological underpinnings of American foreign policy and of their conservative-realist nature, that I will analyze in due course. Also, this is the only way to explain the true nature of the ideological crisis brought about by the disastrous American intervention in Vietnam.

Vietnam created a crisis of self-confidence within the ranks of the American ruling elite, and also a crisis of 'legitimacy' at the level of popular support for the political system. These crises were interconnected, but should not be confused, and the former was probably more acute and significant than the latter. On the one hand, Vietnam dealt a severe blow to the image of American 'benevolence' and foreign policy 'liberalism'; the perception that 'this country [the US] is a chosen people, uniquely righteous and wise, with a moral mission to all mankind'[2] could no longer be preserved intact after the shocks to American pride in South East Asia. On the other hand, the Vietnamese experience shattered the image of American omnipotence, the overwhelming belief that if US power was applied to a crisis and managed correctly it would always prevail. This second dimension of the war's impact on US society had traumatic effects upon the self-confidence of those who belonged to what Nixon, in a 1971 interview, called 'the establishment': 'the people who after World War II supported the Greek-Turkish aid program, the Marshall plan, NATO. But today...are terribly disillusioned about Vietnam'.[3] The **war**, in Kissinger's words,

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1. Kirby, 239-40
2. Schlesinger, 87-8
3. The New York Times, March 10 1971, 14

'profoundly demoralized' US leadership groups.[1] Already by 1968 it had become evident to large segments of the US ruling circles that the cost of subduing the Vietnamese was too great, and that the enterprise should be reduced in scale or liquidated. The old foreign policy 'consensus', epitomized by the bipartisan support to the strategy of containment, had been shaken to its foundations - though by no means destroyed.

The American public, however, even though increasingly confused by the inconclusiveness, cost, and domestic political effects of the war on US society, did not totally break ranks with its leaders.[2] A 1968 survey illustrated the error of thinking that a majority of the US public had turned its back on the war or adopted an anti-interventionist stance:

> [Among] those who viewed the war as a mistake almost as many favored escalation as were for withdrawal. All told...a five to three majority regretted the original intervention, but at the same time those calling for a 'stronger stand even if it means invading North Vietnam' outnumbered those advocating complete withdrawal by

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1. H.A. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, Weidenfeld & Nicolson and Michael Joseph, London, 1982, 84

2. See J.E. Mueller, 'Trends in Popular Support for the Wars of Korea and Vietnam', The American Political Science Review, Vol 65, No 2, June 1971, 364, 371. Mueller shows that there is a misconception about the unpopularity of the Vietnam war in the United States: the opposition to the war in South East Asia, particularly after 1968, became extremely vocal (certainly more vocal than over the Korean war), but it was not as extensive as commonly believed. The reaction in 'leadership groups', however, was more extreme. See O.R. Holsti and J.N. Rosenau, 'Vietnam, Consensus and the Belief Systems of American Leaders', World Politics, Vol 32, No 1, October 1979, 1-56 On the basis of data provided by a questionnaire sent to 2,282 'leaders', the authors emphatically confirmed the hypothesis that 'the post-World War II consensus on US foreign policy [was] shattered' by the Vietnam experience among American ruling circles.

about as large a margin.'[1]

Without doubt, the impact of the war on American society and its political system was profound, but it did not produce - as Chomsky has correctly argued - a 'collapse' of the 'doctrinal system that had served to gain popular support for the crusade against independent development'.[2] Rather, the 'official' foreign policy ideology entered into a phase of 'legitimation crisis' which alarmed the leadership, confused a majority of the public, and generated the concerted protest of important and vocal segments of society.

In this situation, there were two alternatives open to the US leadership: either to try to restore the partially lost credibility of the 'official' foreign policy ideology and prosecute the war to a 'successful' conclusion - running the political risk of increasing the ranks of the opposition - or to undertake a thorough reassessment of the premises that had led the US into Vietnam, and evaluate all the possible 'lessons' of the conflict, with a view to reorientating the 'fundamental' ideology of American foreign policy. There were, in other words, two options for US leaders as far as the ideological dimension of foreign policy was concerned: either to initiate a process of re-examination, self-criticism, and innovation, or to limit the damage done by Vietnam through the manipulation of public opinion and by adopting a more flexible diplomatic posture leading to a tactical readjustment in the perceptions of the way US interests - as traditionally conceived - could best be served.

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1. See P.E. Converse and H. Schuman, 'Silent Majorities and the Vietnam War', Scientific American, June 1970, 20. The Pentagon Papers analyst reported (in early 1968) that 'growing elements of the American public had begun to believe the cost [of the war] had already reached unacceptable levels and would strongly protest a large increase in that cost.' See The Pentagon Papers (Senator Gravel's edition), Beacon Press, Boston, 1972, Vol IV, 603. If the analyst was correct, then the American public was at one with the Executive in that its main concern was the cost to the US of continued aggression in South East Asia. As Tucker emphasized, 'There is no evidence...that for the public at large the growing implausibility of the rationale given for the war was the decisive factor in prompting the conviction of a majority that American involvement in the war had been a mistake.' R.W. Tucker, A New Isolationism: Threat or Promise ?, Universe Books, New York, 1972, 101

2. Chomsky, 74

The reconstruction of ideological legitimation was not an easy task, but it was begun in official and academic circles in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This was done by interpreting the war as a 'quagmire', the result of 'unintended mistakes', or of 'blundering efforts to do good', rather than as the product of the conscious application of principles of hegemonial planning that formed the basis of the Cold War 'ideological consensus'. For Kennan, for example, the war had been 'a long exercise in national inadvertence'.[1] George Ball argued that Vietnam was an American defeat, 'not because [the US's] initial purposes were unworthy or our intentions less than honorable', but because the American 'innocence in the art of extrication' pushed the US forward into 'the employment of excessively brutal means'.[2] And Michael Howard, the respected British historian, discussing a collection of statements on the US war in Indochina by participants in the decision-making process, concluded that, as a result of the lack of evidence from 'the other side':

> We have to decide ourselves, on the basis of previous knowledge, or, more probably, prejudice, what the Americans were dealing with in Vietnam. Were they...defending the right of a people freely to choose their own government without intimidation and subversion from outside ? Or were they...upholding a puppet government against a people rightly struggling to be free ?

According to Howard, 'the issue remains unresolved', and 'the evidence is not available...for a definite verdict to be pronounced yet'.[3] Had these words been written in 1969, rather than, as they really were, in 1979, it would perhaps have been understandable. That they should appear four years after the ignominious collapse of the Saigon regime and eight years after the publication of the Pentagon Papers surpasses belief. And Howard also repeated the mandatory words on US idealism: once defeated, 'the Americans came home, leaving behind a society destroyed at least as much by their generosity and good intentions as by their

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1. G. Kennan, 'The Quest for Concept in American Foreign Policy', Harvard Today, Sep 1967, 16
2. G.W. Ball, Diplomacy for a Crowded World, Bodley Head, London, 1976, 83
3. M. Howard, 'Many Reasons for Vietnam', Encounter, May 1979, 20

bombs'.[1] In fact, however, the documentation contained in the Pentagon Papers makes it quite clear that the US political leadership undertook its attack upon the social basis of the Vietnamese revolution - the rural society of South Vietnam - with eyes open, that the various decisions which took America into Vietnam were made consciously, by the highest authority, on the basis of relatively accurate information about the chances for 'military' victory, and with due regard for existing political constraints: 'Debates revolved about how to do things better, and whether they could be done, not whether they were worth doing.'[2]

As Gelb and Betts have argued,[3] in Vietnam the American decision-making system 'worked' in the sense that it operationalized an ideology that consistently favoured the expansion of the US's military involvement. There was, however, a basic manner in which 'the system' failed to work: it never succeeded in recognizing the contradiction between the US's aims and the reality of Vietnam.[4] The realization of this crucial fact could and should have led American leaders thoroughly to re-examine the ideological presuppositions that had led their country into its most traumatic postwar crisis. But this Nixon and Kissinger were not willing to do. The explanation for it lies to a large extent in the nature of the American 'fundamental' foreign policy ideology, embedded in the conceptual framework of US decision-makers.

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1. Howard, Encounter, May 1979, 24. Basically, this was also the line taken by Senator W. Fulbright, who has argued that, insofar as the US overextended its power and commitments abroad, in the main this process did not occur as a result of a deliberate attempt by successive American governments to subordinate other countries and regions, but that, for the most part, the process took place without conscious design, an unintentional and thoughtless product of the failure by officials to consider all the possible consequences of US actions. See his books, The Arrogance of Power, Random House, New York, 1966, and The Crippled Giant: American Foreign Policy and Its Domestic Consequences, Random House, New York, 1972

2. L. Gelb, 'Vietnam: The System Worked', Foreign Policy, Summer 1971, 170

3. See L.H. Gelb with R.K. Betts, The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked, The Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, 1979

4. See D.E. Kaiser, 'Vietnam: Was the System the Solution ?', International Security, Spring 1980, Vol 4, No 4, 5

CHAPTER 2

POLITICAL REALISM AND AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

REALISTS AND 'REALISM'

What is political **realism** ? The meaning of the term can be discussed with reference to two distinct - though not unrelated - contexts: first, 'realism' in the critical understanding of the nature of politics and in the analysis - unprejudiced, dispassionate, and non-dogmatic - of political conflict; second, 'realism' as a philosophical posture on the problem of the relationship between ethics and politics. On the one hand, 'realism' must be seen as a disposition to try to understand political reality critically in all its complexity and ambiguity and not escape from it, either through wishful thinking, suppression of unpleasant facts, dogmatism or ideological rigidity. On the other hand, 'realism' consists of an awareness of the ineradicable presence of power and struggle in politics, of the tension between moral principles and the demands of political action; it implies the recognition that the assumption of infinite possibility, unlimited change, perfect freedom and justice in the realm of politics would simply mean that one's knowledge of reality is defective. 'Realism', in other words, implies a notion of self-limitation, of a basic discrepancy between what is intended and what is attained, of a sense of proportion that should permanently exert an influence on political thought and action.

Historically, the debate on 'realism' in American foreign policy started in earnest in the 1930s when, according to an authoritative study of the 'realist' school, 'the increasingly overt manifestations of conflict in international society, the disintegration of all patterns of conduct and the emergence of new patterns began to impress sensitive minds with the importance of power in human relations'.[1] The implication, of course, is that before that period, and even for some time afterwards, the element of power had been absent from the American approach to foreign policy, that - in Niebuhr's words -

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1. Osgood, 381

the US was 'innocent' because its culture 'knows little of the use and abuse of power'.[1] The impact, first of World War II, and then of the Cold War against Soviet supported communism, finally imposed upon US decision-makers a 'rediscovery of national self-interest' as a guiding principle of foreign policy and a partial abandonment of the 'idealistic illusions' they typically held on the nature of international politics.

This account of the evolution of foreign policy ideology in the US is not only inaccurate and superficial,[2] but it also tends to pass over the considerable degree of theoretical confusion surrounding the place and function of 'realist' views in American foreign relations. On one side, authors with 'realist' aspirations argue that US foreign policy is 'pragmatic' and 'nonideological', that Americans are 'empiricists'[3], seeking 'objectivity', sometimes - as Kissinger puts it - overemphasizing 'realism'.[4] 'The US' - writes Hoffmann - 'is not an ideological nation, and its policies are not ideological ones...'.[5] On the other side, it is said that US foreign policy is characterized by the pervasive - and negative - influence of an idealistic ideology, which Kennan termed the 'legalistic-moralistic approach', and which he and others have considered a serious impediment to the American decision-makers' understanding of the world.[6] There are several problems here that must be distinguished and tackled independently: First, is there a difference between 'pragmatic' and 'ideological' politics, or, rather, can we meaningfully talk about politics being 'non-ideological' ? Secondly, what were the

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1. Reinhold Niebuhr, The Irony of American History, Nisbet & Co., London, 1952, 4, 30. For Kissinger, however, the 'end of [American] innocence' came during the 1960s, as a result of Vietnam. See The White House Years, Weidenfeld & Nicolson and Michael Joseph, London, 1979, 56

2. See Thompson, 14-50. He argues that 'For more than a century, America has proved itself singularly inept in coming to terms with force' (206), even though it has used it at least as much as (and possibly even more than) any other power as an instrument of foreign policy.

3. Crabb, 258

4. H.A. Kissinger, The Necessity for Choice. Prospects of American Foreign Policy, Chatto & Windus, London, 1960, 345, 357

5. Hoffmann, 114

6. See George Kennan, American Diplomacy, 1900-1950, Secker & Warburg, London, 1952, 95-103

most representative authors of the American 'realist' tradition fighting against ? And, did they adequately characterize it ? Thirdly, what was the analytical contribution of the 'realists', and how significant was it ? Finally, what role has 'political realism' played in American foreign policy ? And, is this the only valid version of 'realism' ?

Both American domestic and foreign policies are frequently characterized as 'pragmatic' because they are held to reflect exclusively a contest for reaching compromises over well-defined interests, not over dogmatic 'principles'. Kissinger, for instance, has argued that American pragmatism 'is based on the conviction that the context of events produces a solution', whereas Marxist-Leninist ideology, which gives communist leaders 'the key element of their self-proclaimed superiority over the outside world', is in itself to a significant extent 'responsible for international tensions'.[1] The presupposition of all this is that questions of 'interest' can be detached from 'ideology', but, as Seliger puts it, even if only compromises over narrowly defined 'material' interests were the core of the pluralistically organized game of politics, it would not follow that what prevails is a pragmatic non-ideological sense of compromise:

> It is not only rash to assume that clashes over material interests are by their nature less harsh and bitter than clashes over 'principles': the very juxtaposition of such interests and principles is false. Principles pertain to values and to material interests. No important fight over interests has been led, and no aggregation, integration or compromise between interests has ever been achieved, for any length of time, without the eventual invoking of moral norms held to be generally applicable.[2]

Even if the 'American way of life' derived from purely pragmatic criteria, it would still be ideological inasmuch as it remains founded on values. The reference to 'higher' values is ineradicable from any system of political beliefs, no matter what their contents may be, and this allows us to classify all political belief systems as political ideologies insofar as the belief system can be said to guide political action.[3]

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1. Kissinger, American Foreign Policy, 29, 35
2. Saliger, 135
3. ibid, 146

'Pragmatism' is sometimes contrasted with 'dogmatism' as an attitude less conducive to rigidity and more amenable to compromise; it is not, however, possible in principle to associate extremism, fanaticism or ideological rigidity with one kind of political belief system only. The conservatism that characterizes American foreign policy's 'fundamental ideology' plays as crucial a role in determining the 'operational codes' of US decision-makers as Communist ideology does in the case of Soviet leaders;[1] and there is no evidence to suggest that these 'codes' are less rigidly adhered to by Americans than by any others as far as the international contest in its various manifestations is concerned. This typical worship of the role of 'pragmatism' in US foreign policy tends to ignore the hold of a particular ideology on American reasoning in regard to foreign relations, but, as Weisband correctly points out, beneath the 'how to do it' spirit of American 'pragmatism' exist belief-commitments that powerfully influence the decision-making process. That they are not easily recognized is 'a tribute...to the force of their general acceptance rather than proof of their minor influence'.[2]

The difficulties of the 'realists' in dealing with the role of ideology in foreign policy begin with their own narrow conception of what ideology is and the functions it plays. For Morgenthau, for example, ideology is national interest disguised in moral terminology. Even if decision-makers believe they are acting for the 'common good', the moral claims will still count as ideology as long as the basic motivation is still one of self-interest. If, as he holds, all foreign policies are basically self-interested, then all the moral claims of nations are, in his usage, 'ideological'.[3] What Morgenthau forgets, however, is that ideology plays a key role in defining what should be understood by 'national interest' in all circumstances. The American 'realists' have concerned themselves exclusively with the legitimative function of ideology, concentrating their attack upon the presumed

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1. See Chapter 3 of this study
2. Weisband, 61
3. H.J. Morgenthau, Politics among Nations, (Fourth Edition), A. Kopf, New York, 1968, 68, 83-94, 315. See also J.E. Hane and C.B. Joynt, Ethics and International Relations, Macmillan, London, 1982, 37

'moralism' and 'idealism' of US foreign policy, to the detriment of the other two crucial functions of ideology which actually guide the state's behaviour and mould the nation's policies. Not only have the political 'realists' misunderstood the scope of ideology's impact, but they have also underestimated the importance of ideological legitimation in foreign policy. In their concern to rid American foreign policy of its 'idealistic presumptions' they did not differentiate between 'official' and 'fundamental' ideology, and eventually confused the two, leading Morgenthau to proclaim that the 'legal and moral platitudes' spoken by US decision-makers are not really 'the tinsel in the show window making the merchandise on the counter attractive to the customer', but that these platitudes actually 'are the foreign policy of the United States'.[1]

Taking the works of Niebuhr, Morgenthau and Kennan as representative of the American 'realist' school, it is clear that what worried them was the problem of the relationship between self-interest and the norms beyond interest in inter-state relations. They developed their views as a criticism of what they thought was the inadequate understanding by US leaders and the public of the realities of international life, and the dangerous American tendency to worsen conflicts of interest by investing them with moral content, thus transforming them into 'moral crusades'.[2] For Kennan, the 'most serious fault' of US foreign policy formulation has lain in the belief that 'it should be possible to suppress the chaotic and dangerous aspirations of governments in the international field by the acceptance of some system of legal rules and restraints', and that 'it would be better to find some formal criteria of a juridical nature by which the permissible behaviour of states could be defined'. To the 'American mind', he argued, it is 'implausible that people

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1. Morgenthau, The Impasse of American Foreign Policy, 27

2. For a detailed review of the writings of the 'realists', see R.C. Good, 'The National Interest and Political Realism: Niebuhr's "Debate" with Morgenthau and Kennan', Journal of Politics, Vol 22, 1960, 597-619; R.W. Fox, 'Reinhold Niebuhr and the Emergence of the Liberal Realist Faith, 1930-1945', The Review of Politics, Vol 38, 1976, 244-65; A.J. Beitzinger, A History of American Political Thought, Dodd, Mead & Co., New York, 1972, 551-77; and K.W. Thompson, 'Moral Reasoning in American Thought on War and Peace', The Review of Politics, Vol 39, 1977, 386-99

should have positive aspirations, and ones that they regard as legitimate, more important to them than the peacefulness and orderliness of international life. From this standpoint, it is not apparent why other peoples should not join us in accepting the rules of the game in international politics...'[1] This legalistic approach together with the American moralism which denies 'the persistence of self-interest, the clash of contending groups and forces, and the need for power as the minimum precondition of international agreement' have, according to the 'realists', 'destroyed' America's understanding of its problems.[2]

These paragraphs should suffice to show that the ideological adversary the 'realists' attacked is no more than an incoherent collection of groundless illusions which have very little to do with the real, concrete behaviour of the US throughout the world. The truly amazing point is that the 'realists' have taken seriously the moralistic platitudes of American 'liberal' ideology in foreign policy as the determining factor in US policy-making.[3] To be sure, this idealistic ideology has played a significant role in legitimating domestically US military interventionism and economic domination abroad, and it of course

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1. Kennan, 95-6

2. See Thompson, Political Realism and the Crisis of World Politics 236

3. Sheldon Wolin has pointed out that much of what is now accepted as 'liberal' ideology is in fact no more than a 'vulgar caricature of liberalism'. Both Marxists and 'realists', he argues, have repeatedly characterized liberalism as 'optimistic to the point of naïveté; arrogant in its conviction that human reason ought to stand as the sole authority for knowledge and action; bewitched by a vision of history as an escalator endlessly moving upward towards greater progress; and blasphemous in endowing the human mind and will with a godlike power of refashioning man and society in its entirety.' In his view, this image of liberalism has 'little or no support in the writings of the liberals' [Locke, Hume, Adam Smith and others], and it seems plausible only because the critics have lumped together two distinct traditions of political thought: democratic radicalism (whose main representative is Rousseau) and liberalism. Wolin specifically mentions some of Niebuhr's writings as 'typical of what may be called the vulgar conception of liberalism'; but liberalism, he says, is not what its critics make it out to be; it is, rather, a 'philosophy of sobriety, born in fear' and deeply conscious of the limitations of man's will. (See Politics and Vision, Ch IX, and pp 480-1). This, of course, is an important problem of political philosophy, but its detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this study. For my purposes, the 'vulgar conception of liberalism' can legitimately be considered an integral part of US foreign policy ideology.

imposes some constraints upon the decision-making process, but this is something that Niebuhr, Morgenthau and Kennan forget in their preoccupation with dismantling some of the myths which shape the 'official' US foreign policy ideology. They do not see that, no matter whether US decision-makers actually believe in American 'liberalism', no serious scholar can judge a nation's foreign policy exclusively by what the state's leaders say about it, but by their actions and the documentation - usually only partly accessible - which records those actions, and also by the works of influential authors less worried about justification and more concerned with actual analysis and implementation.[1] The ideological context of US foreign policy, therefore, has never been circumscribed to the 'legalistic-moralist approach' on which the 'realists' have concentrated their attention. As a result of this simplification of reality, their views have been addressed towards only one aspect of the problem of political realism: that of self-limitation, of a sense of limits and proportion in political action, but their analytical contribution has been, I believe, rather poor from a critical point of view.

Indeed, one is hard put to find in the published writings of the 'realists' - and I do not include here Kennan's reports as a State Department officer - specific discussions of economic, political or strategic problems and of US responses, or of the relationship between domestic politics and foreign

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1. I refer specifically to the 'neo-Clausewitzian' strategists of the nuclear era, like, for example, Kahn, Wohlstetter, Schelling, Kauffmann, and Kissinger among others. It is quite surprising to note the fact that only very infrequently do analysts of US foreign policy make use of documentation, formerly classified, contained in such sources as, for example, the Pentagon Papers, the collection - already mentioned - published by Etzold and Gaddis, on the policy of containment, of the series of Memoranda of the War and Peace Studies Project of the 'Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)', discussed by L. Shoup and W. Minter in their important study, Imperial Brain Trust, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1977. This remarkable documentary record of the design and execution of US imperial planning should have put to rest the worries of the 'realists' about the 'idealistic illusions' of American foreign policy. Kennan himself, who occupied an important position in the policy-formulating hierarchy of the US State Department in the early post-war years, should have done better, as an analyst, than to confuse the statement of policy aims for propaganda purposes with policies defining - in the CFR's words - the 'true national interest' of the United States. See Shoup and Minter, 162

policy in the United States. They tend rather to provide a highly abstract sort of analysis with little or no documentation to support it.[1] As Chomsky, rightly in my view, points out, much of the writing on the 'national interest' serves to obscure the basic facts of politics. He quotes Morgenthau's dictum that the national interest underlying a rational foreign policy 'is not defined by the whim of a man or the partisanship of party but imposes itself as an objective datum upon all men applying their rational faculties to the conduct of foreign policy', citing as illustration, among others, the US 'containment' of China and the upholding of the Monroe Doctrine. Morgenthau also observes that 'the concentrations of private power which have actually governed America since the Civil War have withstood all attempts to control, let alone dissolve them [and] have preserved their hold upon the levers of political decision'. The obvious question to ask, as Chomsky does, is this: under such circumstances, can the US national interest, as actually articulated and pursued, be expected to be simply the application of 'rational' faculties to 'objective' data, or to be an expression of the ideological perceptions and beliefs of those 'concentrations of private power' which Morgenthau talks about ?[2] In fact, Morgenthau's idea

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1. Niebuhr, of course, was a philosopher-theologian, basically concerned to remind Americans that 'we could bring calamity upon ourselves and the world by forgetting that even the most powerful nations and even the wisest planners of the future remain themselves creatures as well as creators of the historical process. Man cannot rise to a simple triumph over historical fate.' (See The Irony of American History, 115). His views on the relationship between ethics and power, however, even though valuable in themselves, belong to a level of theoretical discourse quite separate from the characteristic 'conservative-realist' approach of US 'fundamental' foreign policy ideology. Morgenthau, also, has found it difficult to see in the deviations from American 'idealism' anything other than 'misplaced benevolence'. Even though he opposed the US intervention in Vietnam, he argued that the issue was 'neither intellectual nor political but moral', thereby closing the doors to an analysis of the 'fundamental' ideology involved in the origins of the crisis. (See H.J. Morgenthau, A New Foreign Policy for the United States, Praeger, New York, 1969, 150). Kennan's case is paradoxical in that his written production as a US State Department official is so much more acute and perceptive - clearly distinguishing 'fundamental' from 'official' ideology - than his published discussion on the 'legalistic-moralistic approach' (See, for instance, documents nos 3, 7, 8 and 25 in the collection published by Etzold and Gaddis.)

2. Chomsky, 92-3

that foreign policy is derived in the manner of physics, and the 'national interest' determined as an objective datum immune from ideology is groundless.

What the 'realists' do not take into account - and this is a crucial difficulty in their approach to politics - is that all descriptions of 'reality', in all fields of human knowledge, embody various assumptions about what 'reality' is and how it works. Facts, in other words, are essentially facts-as-interpreted; there is no 'bare' account of reality, no description of the'facts' neutral between competing explanatory theories. Thus it is not the opposition between fact and theory which is decisive, but the clash of opposing ideological conceptualizations, and this applies to the version of 'political realism' given by Niebuhr, Morgenthau and Kennan. There is no doubt that Realpolitik - seen as an explanation of the nature of politics as 'fundamentally determined by the struggle for power'[1] - has existed, and still exists, on the scene as one of the most influential interpretations of political realism. This version of realism operates with a dichotomy of approaches to politics, which E.H. Carr called 'realism' and 'utopianism'. He argued that 'realism' arises whenever people become aware of the failures of schemes to bring about radical improvements in society or in the behaviour of states towards each other.[2] Thus Realpolitik is associated with disillusionment, it denotes a conservative outlook and policies. Carr's dichotomy - which was adopted by American 'realists' - is however too rigid and distorted. That 'politics is the art of the possible' is a sensible notion and a valid characterization of political realism, but how can 'the possible' be ascertained ?[3] 'Reality' - as Stevenson remarked - 'is not what is. It consists of the many realities it can be made into';[4] politics, in other

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1. J.H. Herz, Political Realism and Political Idealism, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1951, 24; on the notion of Realpolitik, see also K.H. Metz, 'The Politics of Conflict: Heinrich von Trietschke and the Idea of Realpolitik', History of Political Thought, Vol III, 2, 1982, 269-84

2. See E.H. Carr, The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939, Macmillan London, 1940, 28. See also Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, 3-4

3. See R.N. Berki, On Political Realism, J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., London, 1981, 19-20

4. W. Stevens, Opus Posthumous, Faber & Faber, London, 1959, 166

words, involves both an element of imagination, the capacity to transcend reality and to impose a new perspective upon it, and a sense of limits - the courage to face up to events as they are and to accept the limits of man's power to shape the world accoding to his wishes. Political action is partly manipulative and partly architectonic; its aim is, on the one hand, political mastery, and on the other, political sculpture, that is, the attempt to mould political phenomena to accord with some vision of order, justice, liberty, and equality that lies beyond the political sphere as it is at a certain historical period. Even Machiavelli, considered by many as the political realist par excellence, did not mean by political realism mere technical efficiency. His 'science of politics' was intended as the basis for a new political ethic. Thus to know the shape of events was to be in a position to exercise prudence or foresight. To select the type of action appropriate to a given situation was to possess a discriminating intelligence which allowed for the weighing of several factors simultaneously as well as for projecting possible consequences.[1]

Traditionally, defenders of Realpolitik have given the notion of 'realism' a defensive, cynical and anti-theoretical appearance. Carr tried to argue that 'any sound political thought must be based on elements of both utopia and reality',[2] but the fact is that the predominant version of 'realism' - to which Carr and others have made decisive contributions - is intrinsically conservative and anti-utopian. The American 'realists', on their part, in trying to curb the 'crusading zeal' of US foreign policy, not only did not correctly assess the legitimating function of 'idealism', but also accentuated the stationary, backward-looking, pro-status quo and defensive nature of American 'fundamental' foreign policy ideology, depriving it of any significant political 'vision'. As far as the first aspect of 'realism' is concerned - that of facing political reality critically, with a disposition to question one's own ideological presuppositions - it is clear that the 'realists' were not able to assess - or only did it superficially - from a critical perspective the non-declarative reality of US foreign policy and its sustaining 'fundamental'

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1. Wolin, 220-8
2. Carr, 118

ideology. To be sure, they made an honest effort to introduce into the formulation of US foreign policy a certain sense of limits, of the tensions between political 'ideals' and the moral ambiguities of political conflict, but the morality they fashioned is essentially negative, empty and passive:

> It is negative in furnishing no principles whatever to guide the citizen towards responsible judgement upon the foreign and military policy of governments...Their position is empty because...there is room for very wide disagreement about what is in the national interest, and now way of resolving such disagreement,

and finally their political morality is passive because 'it contains no ideas about creative action' emanating from the US.[1] Their insights may have been valuable in educating certain sections of the American leadership groups and public opinion to recognize that 'politics contains problems not amenable to solution by the platitudes of Sunday School morality',[2] but between the need to

1. B.A. Paskins, 'Containment and the Nuclear Danger', in R. Harries (ed) What Hope in an Armed World ? Pickering & Inglish, Basingstoke, 1982

2. ibid. Kennan attacked what he saw as the 'Moralism' involved in 'carrying over into the affairs of states...the concepts of right and wrong, the assumption that state behavious is a fit subject for moral judgement' (American Diplomacy 1900-1950, 100) It is not clear, however, whether the 'realists' want to argue that no moral evaluation is desirable in international politics. This inference would require the premise that all such evaluation in inevitably unrealistic, and the 'realists' do not attempt to prove it. In fact, Morgenthau introduces his own values in his advice to American diplomats. Thus 'he condemns those who consider international politics exclusively as a technique, without ethical significance, for the purpose of maintaining and gaining power, and who can accordingly, like the Athenians in the Peloponnesian War, use the elimination of populations as a legitimate strategy. But he himself has defined politics in general, and international politics in particular, as the seeking of power. Where is the force of the proscription on genocide supposed to come from ?...It is clear that Morgenthau needs to bring in morality, as he does, if he is to offer the hope that diplomacy can limit the struggle for power. But it is equally clear that he cannot consistently bring it in and maintain a strict theory of psychological egoism for states and their leaders.' (See Hare & Joynt, 36, 40-1). Niebuhr, on his part, concluded that what is needed is an idealism that points beyond the national interest, and a realism that uncovers the pretence in every effort to transcend the national interest. (See 'The Perils of American Power', Messenger, XVI, May 22, 1951, 6). That the relationship between interests and moral principles must remain at best problematical had already been forcefully argued by Max Weber in his famous lecture 'Politics as a Vocation', in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, edited by H.H. Gerth & C.W. Mills, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1970 120-2

debunk 'utopias' - which grew out of a 'realist' sense of history - and the need to go beyond politics as usual - which derived in Kennan and Morgenthau from their awareness of the significance of the nuclear bomb - there is a gap which the 'realists' have never filled.[1]

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1. S. Hoffmann, 'Notes on the Limits of "Realism"', Social Research vol 48, No 4, Winter 1981, 657

THE PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS OF 'REALISM' AND THEIR POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS : THE HOBBESIAN PERSPECTIVE

In the preceding section I argued two things: First, 'realism' in politics should not be exclusively considered as a view on the relationship between moral principles and the 'necessities' of power; it must also be seen from an epistemological perspective as a disposition of the political actor to understand 'reality' critically, and to avoid the twin dangers of dogmatism and self-delusion. Secondly, I tried to point out that the predominant version of 'realism' as Realpolitik is based on certain definable ideological preconceptions, and is not the only possible interpretation of what being 'realist' in politics means. In other words, as Hoffmann puts it, 'we are all realists now, but there are not two realists who agree either on their analysis of what is, or on what ought to be, or on how to get from here to there'.[1] The problem then is to determine to what extent are specific policies derivable from the fundamental principles of the ideology that those engaged in Realpolitik claim to serve.[2]

The American Realists' version of 'realism' derives from a narrow notion of politics, which sees it essentially as a contest for power, security and survival, and does not take into account, or give a subordinate place to, the elements of cooperation and 'vision'. It conceives politics as a 'technique' governed by 'objective laws'[3], whose function it is to exercise over social phenomena the same kind of control that technology exercises over nature. Given that the 'realists' concentrate their attention upon the international environment, and within this on the power struggle, their notion of politics is closely connected with the phenomenon of war. This leads to two results: first, the idea of politics - particularly of foreign policy - becomes 'militarized', and, secondly, the notion of politics as a technique for domination influences the idea of war as a social phenomenon that can be controlled by technology, a phenomenon

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1. Hoffmann, 'Notes on the Limits of "Realism"', 659
2. See Saliger, 186
3. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, 4

that must be analyzed with the approach of the technician to secure its control, and in which the elements of chance and of human commitment are considered secondary. Finally, the American realist tradition - which includes the crucial contribution of the post-war 'neo-Clausewitzian' strategists - is essentially anti-utopian. Even though it is based on a conception of politics as technique, it does not accept a utopian approach to reality, that is, an approach that tries to conceptualize modes of change and improvement by operating critically and constructively. On the contrary, from the epistemological point of view, this version of 'realism' places absolute weight on 'empirical reality' as it positively is and persists over time.[1] In political terms this position tends to identify 'reality' with the status quo, and order with stability, adopting an intrinsically conservative bias.

Political ideologies are in most cases dependent for their fundamental principles on the contents of political philosophies. As joined together in an ideology, however, fundamental principles assume a less objective form than their philosophical models, for ideologies have an immediate action-orientation.[2] The 'fundamental' ideology of American foreign policy - that of conservative-realism - derives from a Hobbesian-Clausewitzian conception of politics which plays a crucial - though not usually clearly perceived - role as the philosophical foundation on which this ideology rests. To be sure, the connection between the Hobbesian view of human nature and Clausewitz's instrumental notion of war, on the one hand, and Realpolitik on the other is quite obvious.[3] The problem, however, is: in precisely what sense does American foreign policy ideology reflect these philosophical underpinnings ? The study of two aspects of Hobbes's and Clausewitz's conception of politics are, I think, of great help for the adequate understanding of this ideology. I refer, first, to Hobbes's notion of politics as 'technique', and, secondly, to Clausewitz's views on the relationship between war and politics.

In the Leviathan, Hobbes argued that:

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1. On the idea of Utopia, see B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia, Hutchinson, London, 1982, 31, 82
2. Saliger, 120
3. See, for example, A. Rapoport, Conflict in Man-made Environment, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1974, 133-4

> Though nothing can be immortall, which mortals make; yet, if men had the use of reason they pretend to, their Common-wealths might be secured, at least, from perishing by internal diseases. For by the nature of their Institution, they are designed to live, as long as Man-kind, or as the Lawes of Nature, or as Justice it selfe, which gives them life. Therefore when they come to be dissolved, not by external violence, but intestine disorder, the fault is not in men, as they are the Matter; but as they are the Makers, and orderers of them.[1]

This paragraph implicitly contains the main differences between Hobbes's conception of politics and the classical, Aristotelian notion to which he formulated an alterantive. First, the claim that politics can be scientifically grounded and that it aims at establishing once and for all the conditions for the correct order of society. Second, the view that the application of knowledge, its translation into practice, is a technical problem. In this view, once one is in possession of knowledge about the conditions of the correct order of society, one can calculate precisely the rules, relationships and institutions needed to preserve the state. Aristotle had emphasized that politics should not be compared in its claim to knowledge with rigorous science, for its subject matter was the doctrine of the good life, of the 'just' and the 'excellent', that is, the continuation of ethics, and in this context of a contingent praxis it lacked logical necessity. The capacity of politics was a 'prudent' understanding of the situation; it was directed toward the formation of 'character', it proceeded pedagogically and not technically. Hobbes, on the other hand, tried to make politics serve to secure knowledge of the essential nature of justice itself, namely of the rules and compacts that sustain a Commonwealth of human beings. For Hobbes, mankind owed its greatest advances to technology, and in particular to the political technique which was responsible for the establishment of a safely based state.[2]

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1. Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, Everyman's Library, Dent & Sons Ltd, London, 1914, 170
2. This section of the analysis owes a great debt to Jürgen Habermas's brilliant essay, 'The Classical Doctrine of Politics in Relation to Social Philosophy', in Theory and Practice, Heinemann, London, 1974, 41-81

Hobbes's views were closely related to the ideal of knowledge operating in his time, as epitomized by Bacon in his 'new science', which implied that we only know an object to the extent that we ourselves can produce it, and in order to do this it is necessary previously to be able to decompose it. Thus Hobbes argued in De Cive that:

> everything is best understood by its constitutive causes. For as in a watch, or some such small engine, the matter, figure, and motion of the wheels cannot be well known, except it be taken insunder and viewed in parts; so to make a more curious search into the rights of states and duties of subjects, it is necessary...not to take them insunder, but yet that they be so considered as if they were dissolved...[1]

There was, however, a factor of uncontrollability in the field of relations between states, for there is no specific scientific object of which states are the components and that can then be decomposed to make them elements in relationships dominated by political technology. Hobbes was nevertheless hopeful that his science of politics could lead mankind to 'enjoy such immortal peace, that unless it were for habitation, or supposition that the earth should grow too narrow for her inhabitants, there would hardly be left any pretence for war'.[2]

Thus Hobbes established that human behaviour was therefore to be considered only as the material for science. The new social engineers of the correct order could from now on, in Habermas's words, 'disregard the categories of ethical social intercourse and confine themselves to the construction of conditions under which human beings, just like objects within nature, will necessarily behave in a calculable manner.'[3] In this way, Hobbes very neatly separated politics from morality, going in this respect even beyond Machiavelli, for whom the significant aspect of the moral qualities needed by the political actor lay in their public or exterior character:

> They represented a mask which [the political actor] must wear in his role as a public figure; they had no intrinsic value. Thus

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1. Thomas Hobbes, Man and Citizen, Humanities Press, Harvester Press, New York and London, 1978, 98-9
2. ibid, 91
3. Habermas, 43

> while the new science was the product of the moral commitment of the theorist...it assumed a purely political morality in those who were to practise its dictates because politics itself held only a necessary and not an ultimate value.[1]

Machiavelli did not conceive politics as mere technical efficiency, and he preserved a space for uncertainty and the play of non-'rational' factors in human intercourse through the use of the notion of Fortuna. The classical and medieval traditions saw political knowledge as a set of prescriptive remedies aimed at the gradual elimination of evil from society; Machiavelli's 'science', for its part, was based on the premise that evil could not be totally dissociated from the very nature of political creativity, and that the new political knowledge had 'its ambivalence of light and shadow'.[2] Thus he preserved a space for prudence, and did not attempt to carry his 'new science' to the point of scientific precision needed by calculated technique.

It was Hobbes who first tried to place political action on the more certain basis of the scientifically controlled technique characteristic of the mechanics of his time. On the basis of his scientific analysis of the relationships of life, the 'correct' order would be permanently established. As he put it in De Corpore:

> the cause of war is not that men are willing to have it; for the will has nothing for object but good, at least that which seemeth good...The cause...of civil war is, that men know not the causes neither of war nor of peace...But why have they not learned them, unless for this reason, that none hitherto have taught them in a clear and exact method ?[3]

The notion of politics as technique is directly connected to the problem of the control of chance and the reduction of uncertainty in political life; this point, coupled with the conviction that there are 'objective laws' of politics, and, finally, the view that the ethical potentialities of political action are few or almost non-existent, constitute the philosophical pillars on which the 'realist' tradition of Western political thought is

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1. Wolin, 217 (emphasis mine)
2. ibid, 208-9
3. Thomas Hobbes, De Corpore, English Works, London, 1838, Vol I, Pt I, Ch 1, quoted by Habermas, 72

grounded.

The way in which these philosophical principles have been ideologically operationalized in different circumstances is, of course, a complex problem, that requires to be studied with due consideration to the peculiarities of each case. In the field of contemporary American foreign policy ideology, there are, I think, several crucial tendencies that can be linked to the tradition just discussed: First, the militarization of foreign policy and the attempt to solve political problems with a moral and social dimension to then - as, for example, wars of 'national liberation' - through essentially technical means, such as the application of military force. Secondly, the fixation with technology in the design of strategy - and particularly nuclear strategy - which is, again, an attempt to reduce uncertainty through the application of technical means. And finally, the anti-utopian, conservative bent of US foreign policy ideology which expresses a pessimistic view of the 'architectonic' potential of politics and a conception of politics as 'adjustment to necessity', to certain inevitable 'objective laws'.

In some of their works Niebuhr and Morgenthau have in fact denounced the 'technocratic approach' to problems of politics and history, which 'erroneously equates the mastery of nature with the mastery of historical destiny', thus accentuating 'a very old failing in human nature: the inclination of the wise, or the powerful, or the virtuous, to obscure or deny the human limitations in all human achievements or pretensions'.[1] This, however, is not easy to reconcile with their acceptance - particularly in Morgenthau's case - of 'objective laws' in politics. There is,

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1. Niebuhr, The Irony of American History, 127. And Morgenthau, in a 1944 book, also attacked the view that political behaviour can be studied by simply transferring the methods used in natural science. The unpredictability of the political world served him to postulate a sociology of politics in which moral absolutes and radical solutions are challenged and dismissed. (See Scientific Man versus Power Politics, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1944). Kennan, too, has insisted that 'if there is any great lesson we Americans need to learn with regard to the methodology of foreign policy, it is that we must be gardeners and not mechanics in our approach to world affairs. We must come to think of the development of international life as an organic and not a mechanical process.' (See Realities of American Foreign Policy, Oxford University Press, London, 1954, 93)

in other words, a tension between, on the one hand, the admission of the 'dictates' of Realpolitik and, on the other, a concern with the limits of power. Is power a means, an objective, or a necessary goal for the political actor ? Is the maximization of national power a national objective in all cases ? The ambiguity of the response of the 'realists' to these questions is an indication of their ethical and - in Niebuhr's case - theological uneasiness with a notion of politics which irretrievably reduces it to a technique for domination.

CLAUSEWITZ AND THE SOCIAL ELEMENT IN WAR

A fuller expression of the impact of the view of politics as technique - with important consequences for American foreign policy ideology - is to be found in the 'neo-Clausewitzian' conception of international relations which became predominant in the US after World War II.[1] It is informed by a fundamentally Hobbesian idea of politics and is characterized by five main aspects: first, the tendency to look for the determinants of the 'national interest' in the external environment more than in the domestic milieu. Second, the tendency to confuse 'politics' and 'strategy', and to militarize the instrumentalization of foreign policy. Third, the tendency to analyze war from a predominantly technological perspective. Fourth, the identification of international 'order' with 'stability', and finally, the difficulty in grasping the significance of the social and moral elements in war.

To be sure, not all these aspects are explicit in Clausewitz's work, but contemporary Clausewitzian scholars, I think, have not sufficiently appreciated the extent to which his philosophy of politics influenced his views on war, nor have they clearly ascertained in all its complexity the nature of his influence on contemporary Western strategic thought.[2]

In general, analysts of Clausewitz's work and influence tend to agree that, to quote Howard, Clausewitz

> presented the concept of 'absolute war' not as something culturally conditioned but as a Platonic ideal, to which most wars in reality were imperfect approximations. It was 'ideal', that is, in the

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1. A significant number of books and articles have been written on the work of this school of strategic thought in the West, but little emphasis has been placed on its philosophical presuppositions. See, for example, Lawrence Freedman, The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy, The Macmillan Press (for the IISS), London, 1982; Philip Green, Deadly Logic: The Theory of Nuclear Deterrence, Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 1966; R. Aron, Penser la Guerre: Clausewitz, Vol II, 'L'Age Planétaire', Gallimard, Paris, 1976

2. I refer, specifically, to the following studies: Peter Paret, Clausewitz and the State, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1976; Raymond Aron, Penser la Guere: Clausewitz, Vol I, 'L'Age Européenne', Gallimard, Paris, 1976; Michael Howard, Clausewitz, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983; and W.B. Gallie, Philosophers of Peace and War, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978

> sense not of being 'good', but of being logical and [in the Aristotelian sense] 'natural'. The intrinsic nature of war, that is, was total.[1]

This 'nature' or 'necessity' of war should not, however, be confused with 'normality' in the sociological sense - that which is common occurrence - nor with 'normality' in the sense implied by moralists - that which is desirable. Rather, as Aron explains, Clausewitz thought it

> a duty to maintain the absolute form of war as a universal reference point, as the original yardstick for the measurement of hopes and fears - the hopes of those with the means to absolute victory, the fears of those who must never forget the risk of assuming that the war may be limited - limitation which can only be made real with the agreement of the two antagonists.[2]

There were, in other words, two reasons that justified Clausewitz's use of the concept of 'absolute war': First, a methodological reason which, as Gallie has pointed out, is probably Kantian in origin or at least in inspiration: given that war is distinguished from other forms of social action by the ways in which it employs violence, then its use of violence must initially be grasped in its extreme form.[3] Secondly, Clausewitz gave a practical reason for his use of the concept: even those statesmen and military commanders who want to avoid great exertions and decisive battles - that is, who want to limit war - must always remind themselves that the fulfilment of their wishes also depends on their adversaries. Even though, in real life, very few wars come near the 'absolute' form, yet the mere possibility of war approximating the 'absolute' form ought to be the predominant thought in every commander's mind, since it represents either total success or the most complete disaster that can befall him.[4]

This interpretation, however, seems to me to miss the

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1. Howard, Clausewitz, 49
2. R. Aron, 'Reason, Passion, and Power in the Thought of Clausewitz', Social Research, Vol 39, No 4, Winter 1972, 605
3. Gallie, 52
4. Karl von Clausewitz, On War, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976, 581

most important implications of the concept of 'absolute war' in Clausewitz's thought, which have to do not only with methodology or strategy but with the conception of politics that underlies the whole structure of On War. The crucial questions are these: is war a 'force' with a 'potentially unlimited nature'[1] and a 'basic temperament'[2] that can be considered separately from politics ?; and, related to it, when do wars tend towards their 'absolute form' and how can they - in such cases - be controlled ?

On these points there is confusion and disagreement among Clausewitzian scholars. It is argued, on the one hand, that:

> War came about, Clausewitz insisted, because of a political situation...Policy was the guiding intelligence, war only the instrument. But even this was a misleading analogy. War could not be considered as existing distinct from policy, however subordinate it might be to it. It was part of policy, a mode of it...[3]

But it is also asserted that:

> while policy should always predominate and employ war to serve its purpose, it remains distinct from war itself. It is a harness which directs and controls the force beyond it, not an intrinsic part of that force. Likewise, while war must respond to directives, it finds the harness an unnatural encumbrance. Left to itself it would break free and return to its native existence, that is, absolute expression. Therefore, while war is a force susceptible to control, it continues to seek out its theoretical extreme whenever permitted to do so.[4]

The difficulty, I think, stems from a deficient understanding of Clausewitz's views on politics and of his own theoretical problems in grasping the significance of the social element in war.

It has been said that Clausewitz's remarks on politics are 'curiously abstract and meagre',[5] that 'the major omission in [his] work...is a study of politics complementary to the study of

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1. P.R. Moody, Jr, 'Clausewitz and the Fading Dialectic of War', World Politics, Vol XXXI, No 3, April 1979, 423
2. B.R. Nardulli, 'Clausewitz and the Reorientation of Nuclear Strategy', The Journal of Strategic Studies, Vol 5, No 4, December 1982, 497
3. Howard, Clausewitz, 50
4. Nardulli, 496
5. Gallie, 61

the proper conduct of war';[1] these views, in my opinion, do not deal adequately with the theoretical subtlety of Clausewitz's thought. One can agree with Paret that there is no 'theory of politics' in On War;[2] the work, however, rests on a certain view of politics and embodies an ideological commitment to the stability of a certain kind of international order. Clausewitz saw politics exclusively as power politics, with no real interest in the element of 'vision' except as far as the problem of the balance of power was concerned. In On War he used the term 'politics' both to refer to the objective world of concrete historical circumstances (an 'objective' concept) and also to refer to the decisions of the head of State or to the ends of one State with respect to others (a 'subjective' concept). From this distinction there arises a tension in his thought between the forces of uncontrolled violence and those of political reason. When Clausewitz argues that even the more violent wars, those which approximate the 'absolute' form, are 'political' because they are generated by politics, he uses the term in the first sense to refer to objective historical conditions. He held that war has a dual nature: the first type is that of wars of annihilation or wars for overthrow (of 'unlimited aims'), and the second type that of wars for concession, with limited aims.[3] But when he discusses the relationship between war and politics he uses a 'subjective' concept of politics (political goals and intentions) which in fact excludes the first type of wars (of annihilation) as something that can legitimately be considered a rational instrument of policy. If political reason is the element which controls violence and leads it towards defined goals, the fact that some wars tend to approximate the extremes of violence means that, in those cases, political reason loses its hold on the irrational factors of war (the 'blind natural forces').

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1. Charles Reynolds, 'Carl von Clausewitz and Strategic Theory', British Journal of International Studies, 4, 1978, 189
2. Paret, 365
3. See On War, Book I, Ch 1. Clausewitz, it should be emphasized, depicted war as a 'remarkable trinity' composed of 'primordial violence...of the play of chance and probability...and of its element of subordination as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.' 89

What, then, is the principal, if not unique, cause that tends to provoke war's escalation to extremes, to intensify hostilities to the point when they approach 'absolute war' ? There can be little doubt that, for Clausewitz, it is the participation of the people, the intrusion of the social element in war. He committed himself to fight against Imperial France - which unleashed over Europe the 'excesses' of revolutionary war - for the restoration of an international order in which war is used as a limited instrument for limited political ends. This ideological commitment, not always explicit in his work, led Clausewitz in Book VIII of On War to interpret the Napoleonic wars as conflicts which approximated the 'absolute' form of war despite the fact that they were the product of objective political conditions:'It is true', he wrote,

> that war itself has undergone significant changes in character and methods, changes that have brought it closer to its absolute form. But these changes did not come about because the French government freed itself, so to speak, from the harness of policy; they were caused by the new political conditions which the French Revolution created both in France and in Europe as a whole, conditions that set in motion new means and new forces, and have thus made possible a degree of energy in war that otherwise would have been inconceivable.[1]

In other words, Napoleon's wars, though generated by 'politics' (in an objective sense) drifted away from 'politics' (in a subjective sense) because their escalatory violence weakened the rational controls of political reason. Thus Clausewitz implicitly identified 'political reason' - the probability of political control in war - with limited wars:[2] the ends of war should be limited because this is the only guarantee that it would not approximate its 'absolute' form and therefore cease to be a rational political instrument.

Is it, however, correct to argue that the participation

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1. Clausewitz, 610
2. Paret has also observed that Clausewitz 'in practical terms stood for limited ends in foreign affairs'. See 'Clausewitz and the 19th Century', in M. Howard (ed) The Theory and Practice of War, Praeger, New York, 1966, 38). And Aron remarks that Clausewitz 'implicitly gives to statesmen the counsel of moderation'. ('Reason, Passion, and Power...', 614)

of the people in war necessarily pushes it towards its 'absolute' form, weakening or destroying political controls ? Historical evidence does not seem to bear this out. World War II, for instance, was a 'total' war, of enormous violence, but the political controls over its development were firm throughout. And the revolutionary wars of our time - in Vietnam, Angola, and Nicaragua, for example - even though they produce extreme manifestations of violence and generalized popular participation, cannot with any accuracy be called 'acts of pure violence' - Clausewitz's definition of 'absolute' war; they are, in fact, essentially political events. The application of violence, even in extreme forms, can be a political act, and the involvement of people in war does not necessarily result in a weakening of 'political reason': the meaning we give to this 'reason' is not an abstract entity but an ideological elaboration. Clausewitz thought that the social energies released by the French Revolution made war approach its 'absolute' form, but what really happened was that politics ceased to be the affair of elite groups and became a mass conflict, in which the whole society was involved. In these new conditions, it was not possible any more for governments to separate foreign from domestic politics, or society from war.[1] Clausewitz's ideological commitment to the stability of an international system of sovereign states (in fact, a system of relatively equal 'great powers' in equilibrium) made it difficult for him to realize that Napoleon's wars were not 'absolute', but simply politically different.

Clausewitz's thought, therefore, is characterized by the tension between, on the one hand, his view of politics exclusively as power politics, and, on the other, his concern to make 'politics' a harness or moderator of war. His difficulties in grasping the meaning of new political conditionsprevailing in his time led him to think of 'people's war' as a blind force

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1. Clausewitz attributed Napoleon's success to his ability to mobilize the French people behind the war effort, and he concluded that the way to defeat France was to act like France: to fight a 'people's war'. But the conservative powers which he defended were caught in a dilemma: their rule was safest when most questions concerning authority - among them war - were not politicized. As Moody points out, in advocating people's war, Clausewitz was 'mindlessly carried away by the logic of war, rather than articulating a set of policies that would guide the war.', 430

which could easily become 'something pointless and devoid of sense'. Clausewitz still believed that it was possible to control and limit war through the limitation of political objectives; but nowadays, with the invention of weapons of mass destruction, the neo-Clausewitzian strategists have again emphasized the 'blind' dimensions of war as an elementary force, which can only be controlled - particularly at the nuclear level - through technological means. In the same way as Clausewitz saw 'people's war' as 'elemental fury',[1] almost beyond rational control, today's neo-Clausewitzians tend to see military technology as an almost autonomous 'thing in itself', that both creates the conditions for 'absolute war' and the possibility of limiting it.[2]

The fact that - as Freedman and others have pointed out - contemporary strategy, and in particular Western strategy, has become 'infatuated with the microscopic analysis of military technology',[3] and increasingly less concerned with the particular arrangements of political relations on which the balance of terror rests, or with the analysis of the notions of 'politics' behind the technological drive, is not just 'casual' but the product of a progressive impoverishment of the idea of 'politics' in Western strategic thought.[4] 'Politics' is taken to mean merely the manipulation of conflict, not the search for higher values such as justice or freedom; international politics is conceived

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1. Clausewitz, 593
2. Moody, for instance, argues that 'Autonomous technology shapes the way we live, and, in particular, the way we fight wars. As the constraints on warfare become increasingly technical, warfare ceases to be an instrument of politics.', 425. Howard also has argued that 'Absolute weapons, whether mass armies or nuclear explosives, require absolute war aims and absolute enemies.' (See 'War as an Instrument of Politics', in H. Butterfield and M. Wight (eds) Diplomatic Investigations, Allen & Unwin, London, 1966, 198)
3. Freedman, 400
4. An inquiry into the extent to which this situation has come about as a result of a crisis in Western political theory, is beyond the scope of this study. Reference can be made, however, to John Dunn's insightful book, Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1979. A similar process of 'militarization' of the notion of politics occurred in the evolution of Marxism, from Marx and Engels, through Lenin, to Grasci and Mao Tse Tung. See A. Romero, 'Lenin and the Militarization of Marxism', ARGOS, Simon Bolivar University, Caracas, No 4, 1983

solely as a quest for power, not as an activity which could be informed by a 'vision' of a just order; and 'peace' is thought of purely as 'stability'. Politics thus becomes 'technique', confined to urging an optimal course of action without considering the policy basis of choice, or the ends sought. In the process, the difference in nature between 'politics' and 'strategy' tends to break down. This is especially clear in the neo-Clausewitzian reorientation of nuclear strategy in the US, whose essential driving force is a technical one. Paradoxically, in the increasingly rarified atmosphere of nuclear war-planning, more and more limited military options are devised as ways of fighting nuclear war, and this in turn is supposed to increase policy options and help to reinstate political control over the conduct of war.[1] Technical instruments of mass destruction thus become means for the 'limitation' of war.

Hobbes had presumed that the knowledge provided by his 'science of politics' obviated public discussion of it. The epistemological certainty of his method and the concrete results of his technique made it unnecessary to allow the participation of informed citizens in the maintenance of political order: after the 'contract', absolutism would guarantee peace. In Clausewitz, too, the participation of the people in war is interpreted as an irrational factor, leading war towards its 'absolute' form. He did not say whether or how this could be controlled, but it is quite clear that his contemporary disciples in the West - and in particular in the US, as shown in Vietnam and other experiences - are still baffled by the 'intrusion' of the social element in war, confronting it systematically with technological means. In sum, both Hobbes and Clausewitz, from different perspectives and with different purposes, contributed to give the idea of politics the character of strategic technique, with significant consequences for present day 'political realism'.

By emphasizing the relationship between war and politics,

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1. Nardulli, 503. See also Chapter 7 of this study. I must point out that, though the dominant trend of US strategic thought is characterized by its technological 'fixation', there are exceptions to this rule, such as, for instance, some of the contributions made over more than three decades by Bernard Brodie, in particular, his perceptive analysis of the value-issues involved in the Vietnam War. See War and Politics, Chapters 4 and 5

Clausewitz made a crucial contribution to the development of strategic thought; but the absence of a discussion of the notion of 'politics' in his work left strategy under the spell of 'realist' assumptions from which it has not yet liberated itself.

CHAPTER 3

CONSERVATISM AND INNOVATION

THE CONSERVATIVE NATURE OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Soon after the end of the Second World War the policy of 'containment' became the cornerstone of US foreign policy and the principal guideline for dealing with the challenge of Soviet power and Third World political upheavals. The security perceptions of US leaders and their chosen position as defenders of the international status quo - based on American economic and strategic supremacy - led successive administrations to apply the 'containment' policy with a universality that was not sensitive to social, political and geographical idiosyncracies, and to rely most heavily on military force for its implementation.

This globalist version of containment became the dominant ideological 'paradigm' of US leaders in the formulation of foreign policy. A 'paradigm', according to Kuhn, is a set of rules of how to think about problems, a collection of shared assumptions, a common belief among decision-makers on the validity of certain perceptions about the external world.[1] Though applied by Kuhn, a philosopher of science, to the problem of how scientific progress is made, the notion of 'ideological paradigm' is, I think, extremely useful in the study of political ideology, with particular reference to the problems of resistance to change and ideological innovation.

Kuhn showed that fields of science are characterized by an accepted body of concepts and perceptions that set the framework for research. These constitute the paradigm (e.g. the Ptolemaic or Newtonian systems) that sets limits on what explanations 'make sense' and help determine what phenomena are relevant and merit further research. From a sociological viewpoint, a paradigm provides a consensual basis which consolidates the loyalties and commitments of the members of the scientific community; this community, in turn, has as its task the solution of the puzzles set by the paradigm. The bulk of science aims at

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1. Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1962, 10-11

problem-solving within the paradigm and 'does not aim at novelties of fact or theory...'[1]. Scientific progress then consists in fulfilling the expectations set by a paradigm:

> Normal scientific activity, the activity in which most scientists inevitably spend almost all their time, is predicated on the assumption that the scientific community knows what the world is like. Much of the success of the enterprise derives from the community's willingness to defend that assumption, if necessary at considerable cost. Normal science...often suppresses fundamental novelties because they are necessarily subversive of its basic commitments.[2]

As long as the expectations generated by a dominant paradigm are mostly fulfilled, science proceeds 'normally'. When expectations are frustrated, however, when new facts are discovered that cannot be squared with the paradigm, the scientific community undergoes a crisis in belief. Kuhn introduces the concept of 'anomaly' to describe the findings of 'normal science' that cannot be reconciled with the reigning paradigm, despite efforts made at adjusting it. When 'anomalies' reach the stage of 'crisis', the authority-structure of the old paradigm is weakened and the resultant theoretical upheaval 'loosens the rules of normal puzzle-solving in ways that ultimately permit a new paradigm to emerge';[3] at that point, a conceptual 'revolution' takes place.

Kuhn's version of how scientific knowledge advances has come under criticism from different angles,[4] but for the specific purposes of this study the basic elements of his model of conceptual change do provide a useful framework for the organization of my discussion of ideological innovation in American foreign policy. The crucial questions to ask are these: First, what was the nature of the containment 'paradigm' up to the Vietnam experience ? Secondly, what kind of 'anomalies' did

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1. Kuhn, 52
2. ibid, 5
3. ibid, 80
4. For a comprehensive discussion of the issues raised by Kuhn's work, see I. Latakos and A. Musgrave (eds) Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970

Vietnam introduce into the 'paradigm' ? Finally, what sort of ideological innovation did the Vietnam crisis produce and why ? Did it lead to a conceptual 'revolution' or to a merely tactical adjustment of the old paradigm ? The answers to these questions will involve a parallel discussion of the peculiarities of conceptual innovation in the field of political ideology.

By 1962, at the time of the Cuban missile crisis, containment was - and had been for a number of years - the established orthodoxy or dominant paradigm of American foreign policy. It enjoyed broad and solid support throughout the US body politic, and there was general agreement that the policy had been largely successful, both in stopping communist expansion throughout the globe and in establishing American economic, strategic and political preeminence in the non-communist world. The aim of the containment paradigm - as even its name indicates - was essentially conservative: to preserve an international status quo based on US hegemony.[1]

As I said earlier, analysts of the evolution of American political thought have consistently maintained that 'The American political mind has been a liberal mind'.[2] It is commonly assumed in the scholarly literature that the powerful US postwar Right has in some sense been illegitimate, and that the true American consensus has always been fundamentally liberal.[3] This view, however, was highly questionable well before the rise to power of the Reagan administration made conservatism 'fashionable'. Quite apart from the legitimating functions of the liberal ideology, the difficulties in identifying the specifically conservative nature of US foreign policy ideology are related to the persistent attempts of conservative thinkers to present conservatism as 'characteristically inarticulate, unwilling...to translate itself into formulae or maxims, loath to

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1. See Etzold and Gaddis, 226-7
2. C.L. Rossiter, Conservatism in America, A.A. Knopf & Random House, New York, 1962, 69
3. For a thorough analysis of the American conservative tradition, see G.H. Nash, The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945, Basic Books, New York, 1976. Horowitz points out that conservatism is both 'one of the most unpopular words in the American vocabulary' and also 'one of the most persistent currents of thought'. I.L. Horowitz, 141

state its purpose or declare its views'.[1] The problem is compounded by the confusion surrounding the terms 'liberal' and 'conservative' in the US, where - in the field of domestic politics - 'liberalism' is identified with the 'New Deal' policies of state intervention in the economy, and 'conservatism' with a free-market, individualist view-point.[2]

Huntington has argued that conservatism is a 'situational' ideology, that is to say an ideology which arises out of a distinct but recurrent type of historical situation in which a fundamental challenge is directed at existing political arrangements and in which the supporters of these arrangements employ conservatism in the defence of the status quo. In contrast to 'ideational ideologies' such as liberalism, communism and fascism, which approach existing institutions with an 'ought demand' that the institutions be reshaped to embody the values of the ideology, conservatism lacks a 'substantive ideal': 'No philosopher', he writes, 'has ever described a conservative utopia.'[3]

To be sure, very frequently ideologies turn 'conservative' once their defenders consider them sufficiently realized. A distinction should be made, however, between this conservative attitude - which may be characteristic, for instance, within the Soviet Politburo - and the different versions of conservatism that have developed in the West since the French Revolution. The better known among these rests on a belief in the imperfection of human nature, an imperfection which is both intellectual and moral. The consequence of men's intellectual imperfection is that they do not guide their political actions under the stimulus of large, abstract projects of reform, conceived by individual thinkers working in isolation from the 'practical realities' of political life. The consequence of man's moral imperfection is that men, acting on their own uncontrolled impulses, will on the whole act badly, however 'pure' their

1. Roger Scruton, The Meaning of Conservatism, Macmillan, London, 1980, 20. For a more detailed account, by an American author, of the principles of conservatism, see W.R. Harbour, The Foundations of Conservative Thought, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1982
2. On this point , see F.A. Hayek, 'Why I am not a Conservative', in The Constitution of Liberty, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1960, 397-411
3. Samuel P. Huntington, 'Conservatism as an Ideology', American Political Science Review, Vol 51, 1957, 457-8

professed intentions may be.[1] As the 'politics of imperfection', conservatism is, then, essentially anti-utopian, for utopianism is based on the conviction that optimisitic, imaginative thought and action are capable of bringing about a change towards not only a new social existence, but a better one. This Burkean version of conservatism, though influential in shaping Kissinger's political thought, has had a relatively low impact upon the evolution of US foreign policy ideology. Thus it is the <u>situational</u> definition of conservatism which is most relevant in an effort to characterize the nature of the 'containment' paradigm.

Conservatism is based on the defence of privilege and domination, at both the domestic and the international level; its pessimism and anti-utopianism are mechanisms for the protection of existing political hierarchies and institutions.[2] Utopian thinking always has the double effect of throwing into sharp relief the imperfections of the present and providing a stand-point for criticism. In its reaction to utopia, conservative ideology adopts a rigid and dogmatic character; at the same time, however, conservatives can be very flexible at the <u>tactical</u> level, adopting new policies as the circumstances demand and as long as the fundamental values of social inequality and international hegemony are preserved. Thus, for example, at various moments in English history, conservative spokesmen have

> romanticized a semi-feudal and 'organic' community, flirted with the values of the cash nexus in an apology for the entrepreneurial activity, and celebrated the bureaucratic impetus of a fully fledged technocracy[3]

but throughout this process of policy-change there can be detected a dynamic continuity which is informed by a distinctive ideology

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1. A. Quinton, <u>The Politics of Imperfection</u>, Faber & Faber, London, 1978, 9-22. For a discussion of the varieties of conservative ideology, see N. Wintrop and D.W. Lovell, 'Varieties of Conservative Theory', in N. Wintrop (ed) <u>Liberal Democratic Theory and Its Critics</u>, Croom Helm, London, 1983, 133-89
2. Seliger points out (92) that 'Both historical and contemporary data confirm that conservative politicians can be alienated from a given status quo and adopt a commitment to change a society in the image of its past'. It must, however, be said that the conservative commitment to change goes always in the direction of a defence of privilege and inequality.
3. Eccleshall, 62

grounded on a pessimistic view of human nature, a defence of social inequality, and the protection of an unequal distribution of international power.

Eugene Rostow has said - referring to foreign policy - that 'the American temperament resists the acknowledgement of error'.[1] This statement is typical of the particular imperviousness to criticism characteristic of conservative ideology, for its function is to obscure the nature of unequal power relationships by presenting them as permanent and even desirable features of social and international existence. The 'containment' paradigm, until Vietnam, not only enjoyed widespread and entrenched support as a successful foreign policy strategy - which meant that it would take highly unsettling evidence to disrupt it - but also, because of its conservative-realist ideological foundations, presented great obstacles to criticism of any sort. The paradigm had the following main characteristics:

(a) As a basic objective, the maintenance of US political strategic supremacy and economic 'disparity' as against the rest of the world;

(b) A specific commitment to preserve US nuclear-strategic superiority over the USSR;

(c) An emphasis on the use of military force as an instrument of policy;

(d) A strong belief in the power of technology as a 'problem-solving' tool in the realm of national strategy;

(e) A disposition to forge bonds with dictatorships in the Third World, and to combat social change;

(f) A global character, based on an expanded notion of US 'security';

(g) A strong 'legitimating' component, which described US foreign policy as a weapon in the defence of a 'free world'.[2]

At the same time, the dominant traits of the US decision-makers' 'operational code' established the following:

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1. E.V. Rostow, Peace in the Balance: The Future of American Foreign Policy, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1972, 21-2

2. For illustrative evidence on these points, see Etzold and Gaddis, 66, 70, 77, 79, 127, 167, 192, 326, 340, 357, 362-3, 370, 385-442

(a) International politics is a 'game', the object of which is to avoid losing influence and, if possible, to gain more. In this game 'toughness' is a positive attribute;
(b) The international system functions best as a threat system. The premium placed on 'toughness' dictates that negative reinforcements should be used more than positive inducements to influence behaviour;
(c) Legal restraints should not be considered important determinants of foreign policy formulation;
(d) The complex nature of international life makes it advisable to design policies for only a short span - rather than a long term - of history, always on the premise of self-interest and without illusions about the possibility of contributing to long-range structural changes in international society;
(e) 'Liberal' principles and proposals are irresponsible as a guide to policy, but excellent for propaganda purposes.[1]

The conservative nature of this ideological paradigm, and its pervasive acceptance, meant that only a crisis of very significant impact could lead to its substantial modification. Kuhn finds it difficult to advance a simple explanation as to why or when a particular anomaly provokes a crisis in theory. At one time, he writes, the existence of an anomaly will prove so compelling that it 'call[s] into question explicit and fundamental generalizations of the paradigm'.[2] There can be no doubt that Vietnam was a great shock to American society. It showed the limitations of US military power, exposed the myth of monolithic communism and of a Soviet-controlled threat throughout the Third World, and demonstrated the inability of an unimaginative foreign policy to deal with the complex challenges of a heterogeneous international system. But despite its profound repercussions upon the American people's self-image, and its effects on the traditional bi-partisan foreign policy consensus, the opposition generated by Vietnam was mainly directed at certain policies and political incumbents, or, in other words, at the performance of the system, not at the rationales or values underlying it.

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1. R.C. Johansen, The National Interest and the Human Interest. An Analysis of U.S. Foreign Policy, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1980, 371-86
2. Kuhn, 82

Already in the late 60s there was generalized agreement that the Vietnam crisis made it imperative to introduce a series of tactical adjustments in US foreign policy - though the specific direction of these changes was yet to be determined. A more comprehensive reassessment of fundamental ideological premises, however, leading eventually to a new 'paradigm' required a commitment to innovation that could only come from inside the US government, from a team of officials convinced that Vietnam represented more than a temporary setback, and that it should induce the US to respond creatively to the forces of Third World nationalism, to the aspirations for social and political change, and away from the militarization of foreign policy and the hegemonial ambitions of the first era of 'containment'.

THE PROBLEM OF INNOVATION

'Crises' provide the occasion for 'revolutions' (paradigm-substitutions), but they do not ~~make~~ these changes inevitable. In the late 1960s there were objective factors that created the possibility for a thorough rethinking of the basic premises of US foreign policy; the Vietnam experience could have made it clear to all concerned in the American leadership groups, first, that actions based on the prevailing 'containment' paradigm were producing intolerable consequences, and, secondly, that this paradigm was no longer able to explain reality adequately. The magnitude of the paradigm shift induced by this situation, however, was in the end a function of the willingness and ability of those supporting the fundamental tenets of the old paradigm to resist successfully the pressures for change.

As Kuhn points out, both in manufacture and in science - and, one may add, in politics too - 'retooling' is 'an extravagance to be reserved for the occasion that demands it'.[1] The 'retooling' of an ideological paradigm in politics is a complex process, and a distinction should be made between, on the one hand, tactical adjustments of the paradigm designed to cope with new circumstances, but without redefining its conceptual presuppositions, and, on the other, ideological innovation leading to changes on all of three crucial areas simultaneously: (a) on the images of international reality held by key leaders and their conceptual framework for interpreting it; (b) on their vision of their country's purposes and motivations, and of the legitimacy and efficiency of alternative methods for implementing foreign policy; (c) finally, on concrete views about what the 'national interest' demands in specific key policy areas (as, for example, Vietnam, or the 'North-South' dialogue). Thus, whereas a process of tactical adjustment need not imply a reworking of fundamental ideological views, but a change in methods within the boundaries of the old paradigm, a process of ideological innovation requires a redefinition of objectives and of security requirements together with a reinterpretation of 'reality' itself.

Of course, the likelihood of a superpower undergoing a process of tactical adjustment, let alone of ideological

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1. Kuhn, 76

innovation, in foreign policy is less than it is for other, more vulnerable nations. Because of their greater capacity to respond to challenges, they can more easily absorb change without substantially altering their foreign policy orientation.[1] Historical changes, however, can make tactical adjustment and/or ideological innovation necessary, for the alternative could be catastrophic, or involve intolerable costs. In much the same way that a scientific community seeks to adjust its paradigm to account for novelty, a political regime will seek to adapt its system to the new developments brought by change. To the degree that a society succeeds in adapting, its efforts might be likened to a form of puzzle-solving.[2] Rosenau defines 'adaptation' as follows:

> Any foreign policy behaviour undertaken by the government of any national society is conceived to be adaptive when it copes with or stimulates changes in the external environment of the society that contribute to keeping the essential structure of the society within acceptable limits. A behaviour is regarded as maladaptive when it copes with or stimulates changes in the external environment that contribute to changes in the essential structures that are outside acceptable limits.

By 'essential structures' he means the basic political, economic, and social life patterns of a national society; 'acceptable limits' he defines as 'those variations in the essential structures that do not prevent the society from maintaining its basic forms of life or from altering these forms through its own choices and procedures'.[3]

Despite its highly abstract nature, this definition is helpful in that it indicates that the concept of 'adaptation' does not only include a better manipulation - seen in purely instrumental terms - of the external environment, but also the preservation of the essential structures of a society and its political system. In other words, an 'adaptive' process which leads a democratic political system to change into an authoritarian one, would be an example not of successful 'adjustment'

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1. J.N. Rosenau, The Study of Political Adaptation, Frances Pinter Publishers Ltd., London, 1981, 174
2. Sheldon Wolin, 'Paradigms and Political Theories', in P. King and B.C. Parekh (eds) Politics and Experience, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968, 149
3. Rosenau, 38

but of maladaptive transformation. Adversity makes innovation possible, even necessary, but not inevitable, for there is a decisive subjective element in estimating what constitutes adversity and whether innovation is compelling. How do these general thoughts bear upon the US intervention in Vietnam ? In what follows, I contend three main propositions: (a) That the dilemmas of American involvement in, and, later, extrication from Vietnam, could be fully resolved only by reshaping fundamental aspects of the 'containment' paradigm, including notions about the nature of international politics, US objectives and the requirements of American security.[1] (b) That mere tactical adjustment, as promoted by US decision-makers after Vietnam, was defective as an answer to the challenges of contemporary international politics - in particular, the pervasiveness of nationalism resistant to control by the great powers, coupled with the inhibitions and dangers imposed by nuclear weapons - that erode conventional notions on the use of force to achieve political ends and demand original responses to ever more complex problems. (c) Finally, that by failing to innovate substantially the conservative-realist ideology of US foreign policy, choosing instead to make tactical adjustments to 'containment', the Kissinger-Nixon team led the American body politic into a path of maladaptive behaviour, that produced changes in the 'essential structures' of American politics beyond the 'acceptable limits' imposed by the democratic values of the US system of government. More specifically, I contend that the failure of the Nixon administration to respond creatively to the challenge of foreign policy innovation, stimulated behaviour that decisively contributed to the unfolding of the complex series of events that eventually destroyed the Nixon presidency.

How, then, does innovation take place, and what are the obstacles to it ? It is commonly assumed by political scientists that the decision to change paradigms is analogous to a fact-finding proceeding, in which new 'facts' are reviewed on the basis of logic, evidence, and experiment, thus leading to

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1. On this point, I coincide with M.J. Brenner, to whose concept of what 'innovation' consists of I am also indebted: 'The Concept of Innovation and the Nixon-Kissinger Foreign Policy', International Studies Quarterly, Vol 17, No 3, September 1973, 257-8

the abandonment of the old theory and the adoption of a 'higher' form of explanation.[1] In Kuhn's description, however, a decision between paradigms appears more like an adversary proceeding, more competitive than deliberative. What is at issue are new cognitive standards and perceptions, not new 'facts'; a new paradigm embodies a new way of looking at phenomena rather than the discovery of hitherto inaccessible data.[2] As Jervis explains:

> The appeal of the old view is weakened by its inability to cope with some known facts, but much of the evidence for the new paradigm seems persuasive only after people see the world within the new framework. Although many observations that in retrospect are considered sufficient to discredit the old theory are made when the old theory holds sway, they are misinterpreted until the new theory has established itself.[3]

The relevance of this analysis of scientific development for the study of ideological innovation is quite obvious: the crucial point is that it is not enough to suggest that a paradigm is discarded when it is falsified; no paradigm ever fits the 'facts' completely and every paradigm is open to serious objection. A paradigm maintains its hold over its practitioners not because it has resisted falsification but because there are psychological, bureaucratic and/or specifically ideological factors which work against innovation by resisting pressures for change.

The contribution made by psychology to the study of political and strategic decision-making has been enormous;[4] most of the literature in the field, however - in particular cognitive dissonance theory - concerns itself mainly with 'coping', that is, the manner by which an individual seeks to manage his environment so as to minimize discomfort and restore 'psychic stability'.[5] My purpose in this work, by contrast, is political, not psychoanalytical; it has to do with intellectual challenge and response.

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1. See, for example, D. Easton, A Framework for Political Analysis Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1965, 22
2. Kuhn, 144-6; Wolin, 'Paradigms and Political Theories', 137-8
3. R. Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976, 165
4. Two basic works are: Leon Festinger, The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto, 1958; J. Brehm, Explorations in Cognitive Dissonance, John Wiley, New York, 1962
5. Brenner, 256

Also, pscyhological approaches usually have two specific drawbacks: First, their deterministic bias,[1] the tendency to argue that innovation did not take place because it was 'impossible' that it could. As a counter-argument, Kissinger's own comment is apt: 'Whatever one's view about the degree to which choices in international affairs are "objectively" determined, the decisions are made by individuals who will be above all conscious of the seeming multiplicity of options.'[2] Secondly, and related to my previous point, another drawback of psychological approaches is their tendency to establish connections between the most seemingly disparate elements in a man's life, and to try to explain political decisions by their roots in the decision-makers' biography, arguing, for instance, that 'if we remember Kissinger's reluctance to leave Germany, his father's vacillation, Louis's [Kissinger's father] wait-and-see attitude, followed by the sudden reversal into flight, Kissinger's four years of intransigence in Vietnam is given added meaning'.[3] While not denying the validity such assertions may sometimes have, I still think it is important to consider decision-makers as actors able, in principle, to criticize their own most deeply-held assumptions, and to reach decisions on the basis of a critical assessment of alternatives.

A good deal of significant work has also been done on how resistance to new ideas is rooted in the way bureaucracies work. As Brenner puts it: 'The bureaucracy's stake in avoiding the responsibility of innovation is two-fold: intellectual convenience, and the protection of organizational interests. Change is a strain and is disruptive of institutional harmony.'[4] Still, I do not think it would be adequate to reduce the problem of ideological innovation in American foreign policy during the period under study to one of competition among bureaucratic interests and political factions. The main obstacles to innovation, as I hope will become clear in the course of this work, did not derive from the actions of organizational interests in preventing

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1. For a critique of 'psychologism', see Karl Popper, The Poverty of Historicism, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1961, 158-9
2. Kissinger, American Foreign Policy, 27
3. Dana Ward, 'Kissinger: A Psychohistory', History of Childhood Quarterly, Vol 2, No 3, Winter 1975, 330
4. Brenner, 271

certain ideas from prevailing,[1] but from the unwillingness of top decision-makers to scrutinize critically the basic assumptions of the dominant paradigm.

Ideological belief systems do indeed constitute an enduring method for maintaining cognitive balance and organizational stability; being relatively self-contained and resistant to falsification, they are not readily undermined. It seems unwise, however, to presume that belief systems in an open society such as the US, with long-standing pluralistic traditions, are totally impervious to alteration, and I believe that attention should be focused not so much on individual pscyhological traits and bureaucratic arrangements, but on the pervasive influence on decision-makers of the conservative-realist ideological paradigm - despite all the protestations about the 'liberal' motivations of US foreign policy.

Jervis has argued that choosing among competing beliefs about world politics does not involve all the complex problems that arise in choosing among scientific paradigms. Foreign policy analysts, he maintains, usually 'can utilize previously developed alternative images, whereas scientists must often create a new framework. Second, the competing images usually have more in common than do competing [scientific] paradigms.'[2] I think, on the contrary, that the intensity of dogmatic commitment and the propensity to reject criticism can be even greater in the field of political ideologies than in that of scientific theories. Political ideologies are sets of beliefs or values that can be explained through the non-cognitive interests of social groups; ideological beliefs belong to the more general class of biased beliefs, and the distinction between interest and position explanations correspond to the more general distinction between distortion and illusion as forms of bias.[3] As I tried to show

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1. As Machiavelli explained: 'The innovator makes enemies of all those who prospered under the old order, and only luke-warm support is forthcoming from those who would prosper under the new. Their support is lukewarm partly from fear of their adversaries...and partly because men are generally incredulous, never really trusting new things unless they have tested them by experience.' The Prince, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1971, 51

2. Jervis, 161

3. Jon Elster, 'Belief, Bias and Ideology', in M. Hollis and S. Lukes (eds), Rationality and Relativism, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1982, 123

earlier, these two phenomena, distortion and illusion, play a crucial role in fulfilling the legitimative requirements of ideology, particularly in cases - such as that of US foreign policy ideology - where the distance between what is said about intentions and what is done in actuality is frequently very pronounced. Thus, because of legitimation, policy-makers tend toward relatively fixed positions which are extended to include broad areas of policy. This, as Trout points out, creates an inertia with important consequences:

> If projected responses to specific conditions fall outside the scope of the available legitimative structure, then the political costs of reinterpreting or reconstructing it exceed the potential gains of projected response. In the case of foreign policy the domestic costs of restructuring the image of the international situation may exceed foreign policy gains.[1]

But it should be emphasized that, despite this inertia, innovation can still take place, for it is a function both of the intensity of crises and of political leadership.

In spite of all obstacles, and even in the case of a superpower, ideological innovation can and should take place in certain circumstances as the best way to ensure both adaptation to a changing external environment and the long-term survival of the values of society. As in the case of the natural sciences, the prelude to discovery and to all novel 'vision' in politics is not ignorance, but the recognition that something has gone wrong with existing knowledge and beliefs. To be sure, the production of knowledge is not a main function of political ideologies but neither is it irrelevant to their role of preserving interests and values. As 'realist' philosophers of science explain, it is possible to claim both that science produces cumulative knowledge about the world, and that there are no apodictic foundations to it.[2] In other words, science progresses not by making knowledge

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1. Trout, 281
2. R. Bhaskar, A Realist Theory of Science, Wheatsheaf, Sussex, 1978. For a discussion of this and other approaches mentioned here, see W.H. Newton-Smith, The Rationality of Science, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1981

more certain but by producing more knowledge;[1] similarly, innovation in political ideology is only conceivable as a result of the production of knowledge, of the fact that we can learn from our mistakes.[2] Since political ideologies are unavoidably selective, partial, and influenced by interest and position, the only way they can be affected by crises is by criticizing them. Only in this way can it be shown how an ideology rests on dubious assumptions, or how its concepts are muddled, or how it does not account for certain facts, or how it draws illegitimate inferences, or is inconsistent, etc.[3]

Any system of beliefs may be an unfalsifiable one, if that is how it is held. It is not, however, impossible to question the basic assumptions of a paradigm, for - as Popper argues in his attack upon 'The Myth of the Framework':

> I believe that at any moment we are prisoners caught in the framework of our theories; our expectations; our past experiences; our language. But we are prisoners in a Pickwickian sense: if we try, we can break out of our framework at any time. Admittedly we shall find ourselves again in a framework, but it will be a better and roomier one; and we can at any moment break out of it again.[4]

Beliefs are irrationally held only if they are closed to correction by awareness of the world,[5] and human thought - particularly in the field of politics - can cease to be endemically unreasonable only if it responds to 'crises' by a process of criticism.[6]

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1. Shapiro, 565
2. Karl Popper, Conjectures and Refutations, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1963, vii
3. B. Parekh, 'Social and Political Thought and the Problem of Ideology', in Benewick and Parekh (eds), 81
4. Karl Popper, 'Normal Science and Its Dangers', in Lakatos and Musgrave (eds), 56; A. Ryan, '"Normal" Science or Political Ideology ?' in P. Laslet et al (eds) Philosophy, Politics and Society (Fourth Series), Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1972, 99
5. See Barry Barnes, Scientific Knowledge and Sociological Theory, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1974, 25
6. In the field of strategic studies, the vital function of criticism has been well appreciated by analysts of military and political intelligence and surprise attacks. Possibly the best work in the field is by Richard K. Betts, Surprise Attack, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C., 1982

Now, Kuhn has argued that no paradigm is overthrown unless an alternative lies at hand.[1] So far as US foreign policy in the late 60s and early 70s was concerned, there were - apart from a dogmatic defence of the 'containment' paradigm - several ideological alternatives to the prevailing framework, falling broadly between two main groups: options which represented a tactical adjustment to 'containment', preserving its basic ideological premises, and alternatives which proposed a more radical departure from the existing dominant belief system. Among the first group the most important alternatives were the neo-isolationist option,[2] 'trilateralism',[3] and the Nixon-Kissinger 'détente' strategy, which was, in essence, a partial modification of the methods of 'containment'. Despite the significant differences between these approaches, they had one fundamental thing in common: the negative character of their proposals, their refusal to contemplate a more positive re-ordering of priorities for US foreign policy, and to formulate a creative, rather than a reactive, strategy, leading the US from being - particularly in the Third World - the main defender of the status quo, to that of a challenger of the state of affairs prevailing in the less developed areas of the world.

In contrast, those alternative ideological paradigms that put forward innovative strategies to 'containment' were characterized not by their timidity in suggesting new options for American foreign policy, but by their excessive radicalism, which made them both unassimilable and unviable as practical propositions for the US public and leadership groups. The difficulty with the left-wing paradigm - forcefully articulated by Noam Chomsky (among others) in his numerous books and articles -

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1. Kuhn, 77, 80, 84, 149. See also his book, The Essential Tension, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1977, 338

2. See, for example, G.K. Kennan, The Cloud of Danger, Hutchinson, London, 1978, 229-30; E.C. Ravenal, Never Again: Learning from America's Foreign Policy Failures, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1978, 103, 135; R. Rosecrance (ed), America as an Ordinary Country, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1976, 264

3. See M. Camps, The Management of Interdependence. A Preliminary View, Council on Foreign Relations Papers on International Affairs, New York, 1974; also, M.J. Crozier, S.P. Huntington, and J. Watanuki, The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission, New York, 1975

was its presumption that a new direction in foreign policy had necessarily to be preceded by a far-reaching, revolutionary transformation of the American society, economic structures and political system. Given these premises, it is easy to understand why this 'paradigm' has remained the banner of a relatively un-influential minority.

A second innovative strategy was developed by authors who work on the so-called 'World Order Models Project'. Their purpose is to eliminate war, economic and social injustices, and ecological disaster by the creation, on the basis of national self-determination, of a world polity, with a world assembly as its chief co-ordinating organ.[1] Before simply dismissing their views as utopian, it is fair to point out that the argument of the 'World Order' reformers is not that US leaders should base their policies on the erroneous assumption that a system of foreign policy co-ordination already exists. On the contrary, their point is that US policy-makers should stop basing American foreign policy on quite different but similarly faulty assumptions that rest on the premise that a more equitable global system is impossible to create, and that, even if such a system were possible steps towards its creation should be actively resisted.[2] There were, of course, certain aspects of foreign policy where reform did not depend exclusively on the US, and reciprocity was needed, i.e. relations with the USSR and China, arms control, and relations with allies, and one of the main weaknesses in 'World Order' supporters' arguments has been the lack of 'realism' (in the critical sense) in their appraisal of the nature of communist regimes. There were, however, several other key foreign policy aspects where the scope for innovation - given an adequate ideo-logical framework and the necessary political will to effect it - was significant; in particular, US policies towards political and social change in the Third World, international economic relations, the use of force as an instrument of policy, strategic nuclear doctrine, military and economic aid, cooperation on issues of general human concern such as environment protection, exploitation of sea-based resources, and many others where it

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1. See, for example, R. Falk, A Study of Future Worlds, The Free Press, New York, 1975, 150-276
2. Johansen, 388-9

was possible for US decision-makers to move away from the simplistic identification of 'order' with stability and from a view of 'order' as the management of the international status quo.

For this shift to take place, however, a new political vision was required, a vision at the same time realistic and progressive. Its realism, in other words, should not be based on the dogmatism of Realpolitik but on the belief in the creative mission of politics as the search for both order and justice, and on a positive identification with the aspirations of the underprivileged sections of mankind. This vision could only come from a new team of appointed officials disposed toward the critical revision of the way things had been done previously and also toward a systematic approach to policy-formulation. In conditions of crisis, as Steinbrunner explains, 'Men with new perspectives and new modes of analysis are able to shift the basis of common understanding, and widespread consequences flow from that.'[1] A lot therefore depended on the theoretical imagination and qualities of leadership of the men who took over the conduct of American foreign policy after the 1968 elections, at a moment when changes in the direction of that policy had come to be considered by important segments of the population as imperative for the political and social health of the American republic.

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1. J. Steinbrunner, The Cybernetic Theory of Decision, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1974, 3. And, as Kuhn puts it, 'Any new interpretation of nature (or reality), whether a new discovery or theory, emerges first in the mind of one or a few individuals.' The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 143

KISSINGER AND VISION

As an intellectual who became a policy-maker, Kissinger's personality and the context in which he worked combined certain characteristics which, paradoxically, at the same time propelled him towards, and stopped him from, introducing substantial changes in the content and methods of US foreign policy. In the first place, Kissinger had a well-defined belief system; he held a coherent and plausible view of the world, which he had set out in detail before he entered office, and he acted on it. As he noted in his Memoirs, 'a period in high office consumes intellectual capital; it does not create it';[1] and a key ingredient of this 'capital' was his conviction that the essential nature of political life depends on the fundamental character of the participants, which is expressed by the prevailing mode of political leadership. In his view, the political style of the 'statesman' - which he carefully defined and wanted to adopt - should be characterized by 'creativity', by the search for 'true innovation' which 'is bound to run counter to prevailing standards'[2] In the second place, however, and despite his concern for political 'vision' and innovation, Kissinger's belief system was rigidly conservative, thus imposing a host of limitations on his attempts to go beyond containment and formulate a more positive role for the US in the world. He had argued that 'our [the US's] conception of world order must have deeper purposes than stability',[3] but was unable to define them. What makes the 'Kissinger Period' particularly interesting for a study of foreign policy innovation is, on one side, that he saw the need for change, and, on the other, that he tried to innovate on the basis of an ideology that could not but reinforce the US's role as hegemonial defender of the international status quo. More clearly and explicitly than his predecessors at the helm of US foreign policy, Kissinger was a 'conservative' who modelled his world view on the historical study of Metternich, Castlereagh, and Bismarck and their Realpolitik perspective, but whose conceptual framework was also influenced

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1. H.A. Kissinger, The White House Years, Weidenfeld & Nicolson and Michael Joseph, London, 1979, 27
2. Kissinger, American Foreign Policy, 19
3. ibid, 94

by Kant's philosophy and the German thinker's concern with 'perpetual peace' - which made him aware of the significance of political 'vision'. Kissinger tried to adapt the basic tenets of conservative statesmanship to the conditions of contemporary international politics, and the underlying meaning of his major diplomatic initiatives and tactical moves can only be adequately grasped through this ideological prism. Finally, Kissinger worked under a President who - though not as intellectually sophisticated - was knowledgeable about foreign policy, was also convinced of the need for change, and decisively centralized foreign policy formulation in his - and his Advisor's - hands, thus making it easier for them to overcome bureaucratic resistance to their projects.

In his publications as a scholar before entering office, Kissinger has argued that doctrinal creativity and intellectual innovation are crucial elements of a nation's design for survival. Since the late 1950s he had criticized some aspects of the 'containment' policy, in particular its excessive concern with purely military solutions and its inability to offer an ideological alternative to the Communist challenge.[1] The need for 'vision' was a constant theme in his writings, together with his view that 'Any society can reach a point in its development where it runs the risk of having exhausted all the possibilities for innovation inherent in its structure', and his conviction that the US had 'failed to identify itself with the revolutionary period through which we are living', and had not had 'the vision or the willingness to carry through a sustained program to bring a sense of direction to a world in turmoil'.[2] He was aware of the dangers of dogmatism and intellectual sclerosis, and argued that the true function of leadership is to question dominant assumptions and orthodoxies, and to overcome the obstacles placed by vested bureaucratic interests in the path of 'vision'.[3] He repeatedly asserted, first, that foreign policy should not be conceived as 'manipulation' of a given reality but as creation, that 'History's great achieve-

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1. Kissinger, The White House Years, 62
2. H.A. Kissinger, The Necessity for Choice, Chatto & Windus, London, 1960, 98, 303. See also The Troubled Partnership. A Reappraisal of the Atlantic Alliance, McGraw Hill, New York, 1965, 251
3. H.A. Kissinger, A World Restored, Gollancz, London, 1977, 326-7 (first published in 1957)

ments spring from the actualization of principles, not from the clever evaluation of political conditions',[1] and, secondly, that leaders can and should try to impose their 'vision' upon reality.[2]

Yet, despite all his insistence on the relevance of innovation and vision, his awareness of the obstacles to creativity, his perception of the need for change and the unprecedented influence that for eight tumultuous years he had over the conduct of US foreign policy, it is widely held by his (and Nixon's) critics that they 'provided no vision of the future',[3] or that it 'remained cloudy in concept',[4] was 'opaque',[5] and offered 'few clear guides to the future.[6] These commentators, however, seem to take it for granted that there was a 'vision' behind American foreign policy before the 'détente' period, but they do not say what it was; also, they do not articulate a coherent explanation of the reasons why Kissinger - in spite of viewing his task as that of 'evoking a vision of an inspiring future'[7] - never managed to do it. What these analysts forget is that the crisis of containment was in no small measure due to the absence from US foreign policy of a positive vision of world order and peace going beyond the geopolitical game, the balance of power

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1. Quoted in J.P. Sewell, 'Master Builder or Captain of the Dike ? Notes on the Leadership of Kissinger', International Journal, Vol 31, No 4, 1976, 648
2. Kissinger, The Necessity for Choice, 344
3. A. Buchan, 'The Irony of Henry Kissinger', International Affairs, Vol 50, No 3, July 1974, 379
4. S. Brown, The Crises of Power, Columbia University Press, New York, 1979, 146
5. A.L. George and R. Smoke, Deterrence in American Foreign Policy. Theory and Practice, Columbia University Press, New York, 1974, 611
6. A. James Reichley, Conservatives in an Age of Change, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C., 1981, 357. The same point has been made by Stanley Hoffmann, 'The Case of Dr Kissinger', The New York Review of Books, December 6 1979, 22; Ralph Dahrendorf, 'The Man Who Balanced the World', The Sunday Times, December 16 1979; and Robert Tucker, 'The American Outlook: Change and Continuity', in R. Osgood et al, Retreat from Empire ?, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1973, 63
7. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, 182. See also, The White House Years, 65, 781

and anti-communism, and also to the contradictions between proclaimed US values and American repressive actions in the Third World. Kissinger tried - to a limited extent - to go beyond containment, but his 'vision' was deeply flawed; it was the product of a conservative-realist ideological paradigm that is anachronistic as an intellectual tool for understanding the complexities of contemporary international politics, and incapable of creatively dealing with its most pressing challenges. Rather than reformulating US interests and purposes in the world, Kissinger and Nixon actually updated containment by articulating a more developed and sophisticated - but still specifically conservative - response to the ideological crisis of American foreign policy. The results achieved showed both the intrinsic limitations of the conservative-realist political ideology as a vehicle for 'vision' and the insurmountable difficulties for building on that basis a notion of order more meaningful than stability and a 'permanent structure of peace' that does not rest on domination. Thus, contrary to the view that 'the historically significant drama of the Kissinger years was the turn in US policy toward positively relating to, rather than pushing away, the new forces in world politics'[1] in what follows I shall interpret the Kissinger-Nixon foreign policy as an attempt basically to restore the old order, rather than to build a new one.

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1. S. Brown, 153

CHAPTER 4

THE DILEMMAS OF CONSERVATISM : KISSINGER'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

THE IRONY OF POLITICS AND THE LIMITS OF POWER

In times of domestic and international upheaval, the most complex challenges face those who want to stop political and social change, and not those who want to bring it about. For a conservative statesman the dilemmas are clear: the radical struggle against change can easily lead to a loss of perspective concerning the meaning and direction of historical events. Alternatively, the attempt merely to manipulate and contain change, and to manoeuvre in order to reduce its impact, can be no more than an illusion, a futile gesture, a temporal and fragile reprieve, or the useless response of an unimaginative will.

In those periods when the political order is firm and there is no coherent alternative to it, the challenge for the conservative statesman consists in transcending the present, thinking towards the future and trying to foresee the transformations that may occur, with the ultimate purpose of creatively channelling change and avoiding the high costs of revolution: 'it is the task of the conservative', wrote Kissinger in 1957, 'not to defeat but to forestall revolution...a society which cannot prevent a revolution, the disintegration of whose values has been demonstrated by the fact of revolution, will not be able to defeat it by conservative means.'[1] In an era of turmoil, on the other hand, the challenge for the conservative statesman is to try to understand the real causes of events, to make this knowledge serve his own ends, to accept that passivity can be self-defeating and to design an active response to changing circumstances. In both situations, therefore, the dilemma of conservative statesmanship should be seen as a struggle between the demand for political creativity and conservatism's pessimistic assumptions about the potentialities of politics.

Kissinger's view of politics is essentially conservative. He undertook the research leading to his Doctoral thesis at Harvard because he was interested in the problem of how to preserve

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1. Kissinger, A World Restored, 207

and, if necessary, restore political order by containing or defeating the forces that challenge it. This conservatism is the thread that connects the different aspects of his political philosophy, specifically his views on the limits of politics and his concern with stability. His writings represent a vigorous attempt to ground an interpretation of contemporary international conflicts upon a solid philosophical perspective on the meaning of history and political action. This intellectual perspective distinguished Kissinger's writings - and his policy-making activities - from those of the majority of Western strategic thinkers of the post-war era, and also gave its peculiar character to Kissinger's ideological contribution to the formulation of American foreign policy: with him, the European conservative tradition became explicitly connected with the generic (situational) conservatism of US foreign policy ideology. His conservatism was based not on religious principles but on a certain reading of history; it profoundly coloured his whole approach to policy-making, and, paradoxically, explains both Kissinger's strengths and weaknesses as a statesman facing the complex challenges of contemporary international relations.

The revitalization of conservatism in Western political thought took place as a result of the demonstration provided by the French Revolution of man's power to destroy an order that had previously been considered as 'natural' and 'immutable'. The triumph of revolutionary will gave practical relevance to the conception of the political world as 'malleable' and responsive to deliberate change capable of realizing man's most cherished utopias. Conservative political thought, on the contrary, is based on the idea of the 'irony of politics', on the view that the world is by no means as malleable as the revolutionaries tend to assume, and that dreams of happiness can easily turn into nightmares. In The Prince Machiavelli referred to the ironic element in politics, to that kind of alchemy in the political condition whereby good is transmuted into evil and evil into good.[1] As Weber put it: 'The final result of political action often, no, even regularly, stands in completely inadequate and often paradoxical relation to its original meaning. This is fundamental to all history.'[2] Conservative thought sets out to show that pain

1. Machiavelli, 92
2. From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, 117

and suffering are not temporary elements in human affairs, that tragedy is possible, and that awareness of the irony of politics should impose limitations upon what the statesman can hope to achieve without destroying the stability of society and the international system. Conservatism is, then, a philosophy of imperfection, committed in theory to the idea of limits and the defence of a limited style of politics.[1]

Kissinger repeatedly remarked that 'When one studies history, one realizes how many tragedies have been unleashed by men of good will.'[2] History shows that in politics the best of intentions, once put into practice, can sometimes lead to chaos and tyranny: the cemetery of fallen ideals is one of the most congested in the ancient territory of political struggles. But how can a statesman be creative without ideals ? How can he transcend pure manipulation without an 'architectonic' vision ? Kissinger defined 'the most fundamental problem of politics' as 'not the control of wickedness but the limitation of righteousness'.[3] As a conservative, he was convinced that creativity does not always involve a vision of change, that it can also be embodied in a policy geared to the containment of change, the preservation of the established order, the setting up of dikes against alternatives which could easily degenerate into anarchy and increase the number of frustrated hopes. But how can pessimism give rise to creativity ? In a 1968 essay Kissinger remarked that 'we are immersed in an unending process, not in a quest for a final destination. The deepest problems of equilibrium are not physical but psychological or moral. The shape of the future will depend ultimately on convictions that far transcend the physical balance of power.'[4] What are, then, these convictions ? On what values does conservative 'creativity' rest ?

Kissinger's thought is plagued by an insurmountable tension between, on the one hand, a pessimistic assessment of the potential of politics, an inability to find a purpose in

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1. Noël O'Sullivan, Conservatism, St Martin's Press, New York, 1976, 12
2. Danièle Hunebelle, Dear Henry, Gallimard, Paris, 1971, 27-8
3. Kissinger, A World Restored, 206
4. Kissinger, American Foreign Policy, 79-80

the historical process, and, on the other, a willingness to intervene creatively in the shaping of history and even to establish 'peace'. Kissinger developed his views on politics and history in two works written in the early 1950s. In the first one - still unpublished - he used the philosophies of history of Spengler, Toynbee, and, most important, Kant, as vehicles to answer the following questions: how much control or mastery can the individual have over historical development ? What is the individual's role in shaping history in the desired direction ? What is the role of chance in human affairs ?[1] Later on, in A World Restored he analyzed different modes of political leadership as symbolizing alternative responses to the problem of order.

In his confrontation with Kant's philosophy, Kissinger's concern was to discuss the 'tension' between the German thinker's moral views and his faith in the inevitability of historical progress. Kissinger's study of Kant's thought was in fact a way of getting to grips with the problem of the scope available for individual creativity in a world without absolute moral certainties possessing no transcending meaning, and having no final destination a world in which 'whatever meaning history has is derived from the convictions and purpose of the generation which shapes it'.[2]

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1. H.A. Kissinger, The Meaning of History: Reflections on Spengler, Toynbee and Kant (Undergraduate Honors Dissertation), Harvard Archives, Cambridge, Mass, 1950. Kissinger rejected both Spengler's and Toynbee's views on history because these authors, each in his own way, committed the error of identifying ethics with natural necessity. For Kissinger, history must be a personal task, not a mechanistic process, and human freedom should not be reduced to a predetermined process. However, there are in Kissinger's writings traces of the influence upon his political thought of the philosophies of Spengler and Toynbee, and, sometimes, even indirect references to their works, such as, for instance, Kissinger's view that 'The statesman must...be an educator: he must bridge the gap between a people's experience and his vision...' (A World Restored, 329), which recalls Spengler's point that 'the true statesman must also be, in a large sense of the word, an educator...' (The Decline of the West, Allen & Unwin, London, 1961, 366). Also, the impact of Toynbee's analysis of the decline of civilizations and the role of 'creative' minorities and individuals can be clearly perceived in several of Kissinger's texts. (For an interesting comparison, see A. Toynbee, A Study of History (Abridged Edition), Oxford University Press, London, 1962, 217-40, 147-74, 444-55, and Kissinger, The Necessity for Choice, 302-4, and The Troubled Partnership, 248-51)

2. Kissinger, The Troubled Partnership, 251

Kant had argued that man's obligation to act as he would all other men act - the universalization of the will or 'categorical imperative' - impels him to work for universal peace. He did not content himself with the notion of an inner spirituality with no implications for public life, as this would mean accepting that the ethical domain has no relevance for history. The categorical imperative cannot and does not command man to do something that is impossible; in other words, 'ought' implies 'can'. The realizability of the categorical imperative and the idea of human progress were the two pillars of Kant's 'rational faith', of his hope that mankind was progressing slowly but surely in the direction of universal peace:[1] 'nature', he wrote in a 1795 essay,

> guarantees perpetual peace by the actual mechanism of human inclinations. And while the likelihood of its being attained is not sufficient to enable us to prophesy the future theoretically, it is enough for practical purposes. It makes it our duty to work our way towards this goal, which is more than an empty chimera.[2]

This 'natural' progress toward civility, however, should not be confused with the moral development of the human spirit;[3] it merely gives us a basis for optimism, pointing the way to a 'rational faith' in the possibility of peace.

Kissinger was dissatisfied with Kant's handling of the tensions between, on one side, the idea that our moral duty for peace should enable us to form a conception of its historical attainability, and, on the other, the deterministic overtones of the philosopher's views on 'natural progress'. For Kissinger there could not be reconciliation between teleology and moral philosophy (and this is what led him to reject Spengler's and Toynbee's philosophies of history): 'No compromise between these two positions is possible', he wrote, 'either ethical activity can be meaningful out of an apprehension of its principle, or it is reduced to a function of nature's mechanism.'[4] If history and

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1. P. Dickson, Kissinger and the Meaning of History, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978, 54-5
2. I. Kant, 'Perpetual Peace', in Kant's Political Writings (edited by H. Reiss), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971, 114
3. I. Kant, On History, Bobbs-Merrill, New York, 1963, 151
4. Kissinger, The Meaning of History, 309-10

nature are synonymous, he argued, then man in his political role possesses no freedom and hence no responsibility for his acts.

Kissinger went too far in his criticism of Kant, for despite his allegation that the German thinker attempted to base his moral philosophy on a philosophy of history, the truth is that Kant carefully preserved the independence of the ethical realm from subordination to natural causality. As he put it in a 1798 essay:

> The profit which will accrue to the human race as it works its way forward will not be an ever increasing quantity of morality in its attitudes. Instead, the legality of its attitudes will produce an increasing number of actions governed by duty, whatever the particular motive behind these actions may be...Such developments do not mean, however, that the basic moral capacity of mankind will increase in the slightest... For we must not expect too much of human beings in their progressive improvements, or else we shall merit the scorn of those politicians who would gladly treat man's hopes of progress as the fantasies of an overheated mind.[1]

Kant's optimistic assessment of the possibilities of human progress was of course not unconnected with the general ideological and political climate of the 'age of the enlightenment'. In the same manner, Kissinger's pessimism - a permanent component of conservatism - is probably to some extent related to his experiences of war, exile, and the direct effects of Nazism on his family's fortunes,[2] all of which possibly made it very difficult for him to believe in the universal moral values that form the basis of Kant's faith in human progress. But their differences cannot be reduced merely to a question of psychological dispositions; there is a deeper aspect which has to do with the conception of the relationship between ethics and politics.

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1. Kant's Political Writings, 187-8 (emphasis mine). In his analysis of Kant's views on history, Kissinger concentrated on certain passages of the philosopher's works which suggest a belief in a 'hidden plan of nature', without connecting them adequately with the complex structure of Kant's epistemology. See ibid, 50, 88-9, 108. Also, for a concise statement of Kant's views on the 'unconditional' nature of the moral law, see his Critique of Judgement, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973, 98

2. D. Ward, 289-92

Kant held that the categorical imperative impels man to work for peace. As he put it, 'It is a pleasant dream to hope that a political product of the sort we...have in mind' (i.e. a peaceful world order) 'will one day be brought to perfection, at however remote a date. But it is not merely conceivable that we can continually approach such a state; so long as it can be reconciled with the moral law, it is also a duty...to do so.'[1] Kissinger, on the other hand, wanted to find an equilibrium between the view that man can act as a free moral agent in history and his position that there are no eternal values or 'final ends'. If man cannot receive guidance from moral law as enunciated by Kant, then man must create his own meaning. In Kissinger's words: 'The ultimate meaning of history - as of life - we can find only within ourselves.'[2] But, on these premises, Kissinger was faced with the problem of which principles - beyond mere survival and the manipulation of power - should guide the statesman's actions, or, to put it differently, which values - different from the conquest of power as an end in itself - should be at the basis of political action, and which limits were going to be respected in the contest for power.

Kissinger's solution to the problem of the relationship between ethical values and political creativity was to adopt Kant's notion of the 'unsocial sociability' of mankind, the view that order can emerge from the interplay of men's conflicting interests. This is so, according to Kissinger, because man's vulnerabilities establish limits upon the tendency towards infinite self-assertion. But he went beyond Hobbes's idea that desire for self-preservation induces moderation by arguing that the recognition of the limits of power is in itself a 'moral' act.[3] Concern with the 'limits of power' was Kissinger's main reason for praising the efforts of Metternich, Castlereagh and Bismarck because, presumably, they recognized those 'limits' and tried whenever possible to use diplomacy rather than force to achieve thier objectives. The value he attached to 'moderation' also led him to attack Napoleon and Tsar Alexander I: Bonaparte

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1. Kant's Political Writings, 188
2. Kissinger, The Meaning of History, 22-3
3. ibid, 25-6, 345-6. Also, H.A. Kissinger, 'Force and Diplomacy in the Nuclear Age', Foreign Affairs, 34, April 1956, 349

because he believed his power to be infinite; Alexander because he represented a policy of 'absolute' moral claims. The 'man of will' (Napoleon) was destroyed by the 'man of proportion' (Metternich) because the French Emperor 'was incapable of the final insight: the recognition of limits'.[1]

For Kissinger, historical experience, not a universal moral law, shows the need for a 'sense of proportion'; moral claims involve 'a quest for absolutes, a denial of nuance, a rejection of history'.[2] In his view, conservative statesmanship, with its pessimistic assessment of politics and of human possibilities is ethically superior to the moralism of 'prophets' (such as Tsar Alexander I), for 'the claims of the prophet are a counsel of perfection, and perfection implies uniformity. Utopias are not achieved except by a process of levelling and dislocation that must erode all patterns of obligation.'[3]

Kissinger tried to base his doctrine of limits on Kant's moral philosophy,[4] but though his view that principles of self-restraint play a role in Kant's ethics is correct in a general sense, Kissinger's reasons to emphasize the need for self-limitation are not those of Kant.[5] The need for moderation arises in Kant's ethics because man's actions should be consistent in order to fulfil the injunction to universalize one's will in accordance with the 'categorical imperative'. Moderation, however, is not considered by Kant a moral virtue in itself. As he explained in a 1797 essay,

> Moderation in the affections and passions, self-control, and calm deliberation...are far from deserving to be called good without qualification...for without the principles of a good will, they may become extremely bad; and the coolness of a villain not only makes him far more dangerous, but also directly makes him more abominable in our eyes than he would have been without it.[6]

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1. Kissinger, A World Restored, 77
2. ibid, 316
3. ibid
4. Kissinger, The Meaning of History, 261
5. Dickson, 96-7
6. I. Kant, Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals, Bobbs-Merrill, New York, 1949, 11-2

Thus moderation and a 'sense of proportion' may sometimes produce the opposite of what the truly moral man wishes.

The crucial problem for Kissinger was to preserve a margin for political creativity in a world 'without meaning'; for Kant, on the other hand, the central issue was to preserve a notion of moral behaviour and a rational faith in man's progress. Since it had not been shown that perfectibility was impossible, the German philosopher felt it a moral imperative to believe in the possibility and to act <u>as if</u> it were feasible, thus contributing to bringing about the desired end.[1] In this specific sense Kant might be characterized as a 'utopian', for the first prerequisite of utopian thinking is, necessarily, a degree of dissatisfaction with the current order of things, together with a belief in progress. Utopianism does not - contrary to Popper's argument - inevitably imply that 'rational political action must be based upon a more or less clear and detailed description or blueprint of our ideal state, and also upon a plan or blueprint of the historical path that leads towards this goal'.[2] What it <u>does</u> imply is an optimistic faith in the future, and the conviction that imaginative thought and action are capable of bringing about a change towards not only a new social existence, but a better one:

> Man has the faculty of fantasy; he can imagine that which is not. The empiricist chooses not to use this faculty, confining himself to observations of what <u>is</u> (which all too often turn into justifications of the status quo), while the utopian employs it in constructing alternative possibilities...[3]

This 'empiricism' constitutes the epistemological foundation of the conservative-realist version of political realism, and determines its narrowness of vision.

Kissinger's inability to share Kant's 'rational faith', together with his determination to avoid the pitfalls of a nihilistic philosophy of history, left him with the 'sense of

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1. F.E. Manuel and F.P. Manuel, <u>Utopian Thought in the Western World</u>, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1979, 530
2. Karl Popper, <u>Conjectures and Refutations</u>, 358
3. Goodwin and Taylor, 99

proportion' - so valued in theory by conservative statesmen - as the highest principle of action and political creativity. His notion that 'if a state calculated correctly it would understand that there are inherent limits to its strength, and it would produce a rather moderate foreign policy'[1] was based on a particular interpretation of Bismarck's career. In essence, Kissinger argued that Bismarck possessed an 'agility of conception' and a 'sense of proportion' that turned power into an 'instrument of self-restraint'.[2] This assessment of the Prussian Chancellor's performance is, however, highly questionable. To be sure, Bismarck was a master in the use of power, but one who consistently prevented his fellow-Germans from developing a political sense and a breed of politicians competent to preside over the machine that the industrialists and bankers had developed, systematically transforming Prussia in the process into a police state. To quote Crankshaw,

> the man who fought his King and the generals so stubbornly after Königgrätz, throwing everything he had in the interests of moderation, was the man who four years earlier had defied parliament and made a ruin of constitutional government; he was the man who plunged Germany into civil war on his own responsibility and against the urgings of his sovereign; and he was the man who showed no moderation whatsoever after the defeat of France in 1871.[3]

The Prussian Chancellor not only subordinated morality to the supposed needs of the state, but also exalted the amoral concept of politics into a principle, trying in the process to force his countrymen to surrender to it, concentrating great power exclusively in his hands, and producing widespread demoralization in the governmental machinery, subjecting it to the arbitrariness of a single individual.

Was Bismarck nevertheless a 'creative' statesman ? And what does Kissinger mean by political 'creativity' ? Kissinger attempted to formulate a definition by contrasting the trajectories of Metternich and Bismarck. In his view, Metternich's political

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1. H.A. Kissinger, For the Record: Selected Statements, 1977-1980, Weidenfeld & Nicolson and Michael Joseph, London, 1981, 120
2. H.A. Kissinger, 'The White Revolutionary: Reflections on Bismarck', Daedalus, Vol 97, Summer 1968, 880-924
3. E. Crankshaw, Bismarck, Macmillan, London, 1981, 243

philosophy expressed the essence of the conservative tradition, for the Austrian foreign minister, in attempting to suppress revolution, 'posed the conservative challenge as the need to transcend the assertion of the exclusive validity of the will and as the requirement to limit the claims of power'.[1] Metternich, however, lacked the attribute of 'creativity':

> So agile was Metternich's performance that it was forgotten that its basis was diplomatic skill and that it left the fundamental problems unsolved, that it was manipulation and not creation...He understood the forces at work better than the majority of his contemporaries, but his knowledge proved of little avail, because he used it almost exclusively to deflect their inexorable march, instead of placing it into his service for a task of construction.[2]

Bismarck, on the other hand, was a <u>defiant</u> and 'creative' conservative who 'drew his inspiration from a vision of the future'.[3] Despite Metternich's success in restoring peace to Europe after the defeat of Napoleon, Kissinger held that the Austrian diplomat's policies lacked ultimate stature because he confused self-restraint with tranquility and made stability the only acceptable political objective. His conceptual 'system' answered the question of the cause of revolution, 'but it gave no indication of how to cope with it once it had occurred. It spoke abstractly of its readiness to reform but it never discussed what specific measures it would consider appropriate'.[4] Unlike Metternich, Bismarck viewed history not as a universe governed by eternal laws, but as an indeterminate process. From this perspective history is a struggle to accommodate change, and in that struggle a successful policy depends on a proper calculus of power:

> The insistence in identifying his will with the meaning of events would forever mark Bismarck's revolutionary quality. Neither the sense of reverence for traditional forms of the conservatives nor the respect for the intellectual doctrines of the liberals was a part of Bismarck's nature. He could appeal to either if

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1. Kissinger, <u>A World Restored</u>, 206
2. <u>ibid</u>, 322-3
3. Kissinger, 'The White Revolutionary', 910
4. Kissinger, <u>A World Restored</u>, 204-5

> necessary, but aloofly, appraisingly, and with a cool eye for their limits.[1]

In the process - Kissinger argued - Bismarck freed statesmen to think in terms of 'interests', not 'ideologies', and to advance them with the ruthlessness demanded by an international system composed of independent nation-states.

Kissinger's account is ripe with paradoxes and contradictions. On one hand he argues that the distinctive feature of conservatism is the 'doctrine of limits', but on the other he attacks Metternich because his 'skilful sense of proportion was appropriate for a period whose structure was unchallenged and whose components were animated by a consciousness of their safety; but it was sterile in an era of constant flux'. Whenever Metternich operated within a fixed framework, his conduct of diplomacy was masterly; whenever he was forced to 'create his own objectives', there was about him 'an aura of futility'.[2] But the question remains: What should Metternich's objectives have been ? The conservative statesman's dilemma boils down to the insurmountable tensions implicit in the attempt to reconcile political creativity, which requires innovation and change, with a policy ultimately committed to the preservation of the status quo. Kissinger argued that conservatism must be at least as imaginative and intellectually resourceful as its opposition, rather than bound to outmoded concepts or irrational convictions,[3] but his own analysis of Metternich's performance reveals the extent to which conservatives are sytematically prepared to sacrifice whatever is necessary for the sake of stability - considered the primary aim of politics. The polyglot Austrian Empire, with its cumbersome bureaucracy and governmental practices was certainly anachronistic: 'Unable to adapt its domestic structure, unable to survive with it in a century of nationalism, Austria's most successful policies amounted to no more than a reprieve...not to a work of construction.'[4] But what else could Metternich have done ? If the revolutionary spirit was so widespread in Europe, how else could it be combated except by a policy geared to the preservation of

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1. Kissinger, 'The White Revolutionary', 894
2. Kissinger, A World Restored, 323
3. ibid, 195
4. ibid, 281

traditional authority ? If the causes of revolution - as Metternich himself realized - were so deep-rooted, what possible remedy could exist ?

The Austrian Minister insisted that the defence of existing institutions, whatever their defects, was in fact possible. If the demand for change was universal, it was all the more imperative to resist it in the name of stability. He believed that the overthrow of any part of the existing order would have great symbolic importance, and that it could threaten the whole edifice; therefore every part had to be protected. He did not accept reforms as an alternative, because he did not have a clear conception of where these would lead. In the final analysis, his policies embodied the fundamental purpose of conservatism: the maintenance of 'order' for the benefit of those who occupy a privileged position within it.

Writing several years after publishing his analysis of Metternich's diplomacy, Kissinger recognized that

> societies have collapsed not because their leaders did not understand what the environment demanded of them <u>but because they understood only too well</u>. The Austro-Hungarian Empire failed to survive because to adapt to the forces of liberalism and nationalism <u>seemed to its rulers inconsistent with the reason for its existence</u>. It could have participated in the evolutionary process only by giving up its distinctive qualities.[1]

Metternich's conservative ideology did not allow him to transform his diplomacy of 'containment' of change into an 'act of construction', however much he was aware of its limitations. His skill enabled Austria, for a while, to avoid the hard choice between reform and revolution, but it only postponed the hour of reckoning, leaving a myriad of basic problems unsolved.

Kissinger's interpretation of Bismarckian policies is also paradoxical. On the one hand he attacked Napoleon and Alexander I because they were 'revolutionaries' who 'strove to identify the organization of Europe with their will'[2] yet, on the other, he praised Bismarck <u>for being</u> a 'revolutionary' whose revolution 'appeared in the guise of conservatism'.[3] On one side

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1. Kissinger, <u>The Necessity for Choice</u>, 301-2 (emphasis mine)
2. Kissinger, <u>A World Restored</u>, 316
3. Kissinger, 'The White Revolutionary', 889

Kissinger defended the view that the crucial problem of politics is to restrain the exercise of righteous power, that 'volition, however noble' must be 'limited by forces transcending the will',[1] and yet he found Bismarck's 'revolutionary qualities', his tendency to 'identify his will with the meaning of events' praiseworthy. True, Kissinger did not conclude that Bismarck's policies were an unmixed good: 'The manner in which Germany was unified deprived the international system of flexibility even though it was based on maxims that presupposed the infinite adaptability of the principal actors.'[2] It was, in theory, feasible in those conditions to manage power with restraint, but the feat could only be accomplished by statesmen of Bismarck's dexterity, and the Prussian Chancellor 'proved unable to transform the personal act of creation into institutions that can be maintained by an average standard of performance.'[3]

What, then, was Bismarck's legacy ? Apart from the ruthless use of power that led eventually to Prussian domination of Germany under autocratic rule, and to the outbreak of a cataclysmic European war, what lessons in 'moderation' can he be taken to have given ? If the management of power provides its own justification, how can we differentiate between political 'creativity' and mere 'manipulation' ? Kissinger did not formulate an answer to these questions, and the tensions in his political thought are the result of his inability to reconcile his conservatism with a consistent set of positive values and purposes that can serve as a guide to action for the statesman. In the final analysis, both Metternich and Bismarck were left with the security of the 'balance of power' as an end in itself, but - as Kant has pointed out - 'a permanent universal peace by means of a so-called...balance of power is a pure illusion, like Swift's story of the house which the builder had constructed in such perfect harmony with all the laws of equilibrium that it collapsed as soon as a sparrow alighted on it.'[4] Kant clearly felt that the state of war between nations and the 'balance of power' are morally distasteful conditions that should be changed on the

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1. Kissinger, A World Restored, 206
2. Kissinger, 'The White Revolutionary', 920
3. ibid, 890
4. Kant's Political Writings, 92

basis of values such as justice, freedom, peace, and cosmopolitanism. Conservatives, on the other hand, see the creation of order as an end in itself; their 'vision', therefore, does not go beyond the preservation of stability as an objective to which all others - including the respect for the limits of power - must be subordinated. As a thinker and practitioner in the political field, Kissinger urged an 'active recognition of limits', but the Cambodian operations of 1969-1971, the Christmas bombing of Vietnam, and the wiretapping of his associates - among other actions in which he played a key role - suggest that he did not act on his own advice.

The power-politics approach to foreign policy-making has traditionally relied on an amoral conception of the behaviour of the state, but in his writings Kissinger attempted to 'import a moral solvent into this situation'.[1] This 'moral solvent' is the view of the primacy of order as the precondition of peace and security. It is commonly held that there exists an inherent conflict between order and justice, and in that context 'justice' has a moral content. But the implications of political and strategic instability on the international system gave Kissinger a different perspective. For him, the creation or restoration of order - seen as stability - became in themselves a moral imperative. He argued that in a system of sovereign states with conflicting interests 'peace' cannot be considered the normal pattern of international relations but the product of stability. Peace is not a goal that can be reached directly, but the expression of a certain context of power relationships. It is to the creation of this context, and not towards 'peace' as an abstract objective, that diplomacy must address itself. Stability, then, depends upon the degree of acceptance by different states of this power context, and this acceptance is what establishes its 'legitimacy'.[2]

Contrary to Kissinger, however, I think 'order' should not be considered as some kind of abstract condition of the inter-

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1. Philip Windsor, 'Henry Kissinger's Scholarly Contribution', British Journal of International Studies, No 1, April 1975, 28
2. Kissinger, A World Restored, 1-3

national system, but as a specific set of power relationships existing at any given time. To quote King,

> The question cannot meaningfully be whether or not we want order per se, but what type or degree of order we want, and how far we are prepared to go to defend some particular arrangement, some particular set of relations, which we desire (and accordingly label 'order').[1]

The demand for 'order' is always implicitly a demand for some specific kind of political or social system, and the crucial question from the point of view of ideological analysis is whether the particular form 'order' will assume at any given time will, or should, be regarded as just.

The conservative call for 'order' usually consists of a justification of stability as an end in itself, a demand for the protection of the basic tenets of the existing order, a plea for the perpetuation of the status quo. It is, also, a demand for the suppression or elimination of some form of conflict. According to Kissinger, the challenges to 'order' come from two sources: first, the political challenge of revolutionary or dissatisfied states to the stability of the balance of power (a 'balance' built to serve the interests of the dominant powers within it); and, secondly, the social challenge of domestic forces opposed to the current state of things. In his view, 'the true conservative is not at home in social struggle. He will attempt to avoid unbridgeable schism, because he knows that a stable social structure thrives not on triumphs but on reconciliations.'[2] The conservatives' concern with stability has traditionally been an obstacle to their understanding of the impact of the social element in politics and war; that is, the effects of social inequalities in the origin of revolutions, and of the participation of new social groups in the transformation of war. Conservative political thought also finds it difficult to accommodate the demand for justice within the narrow limits of its commitment to stability. The conservative view that 'order is prior to justice' embodies the injunction that the existing order should be accepted together with its injustices, for fear that otherwise

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1. Preston King, The Ideology of Order. A Comparative Analysis of Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes, Allen & Unwin, London, 1974, 278
2. Kissinger, A World Restored, 193

there will be no order at all. An argument for order, however, can never be regarded as ethically superior to a demand for justice, for it is merely another way of saying - often covertly - that some particular order, at the international or domestic level, is 'just', 'peaceful', or 'secure'.[1] The dilemma for conservative ideology is, then, that to treat the creation or restoration of order - conceived of as the preservation of stability - as a 'moral imperative' produces the risk of legitimating those very social and political systems that are a threat both to order and justice.

Again, the quest for stability as a fundamental objective of the conservative statesman is not easy to reconcile with Kissinger's concern with political 'creativity'. The problem of how to prevent 'stability' from becoming hostage to the status quo cannot be overcome within the ideological boundaries of conservatism.

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1. King, 286

THE FOREIGN POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Ole Holsti has argued that

> it is not very fruitful to assume direct linkages between beliefs and foreign policy action...[and]...it is important to recognize the distinction between decisions and foreign policy actions. The bureaucratic politics literature has illustrated the many potential sources of slippage between executive decisions and the implementation of policy in the form of foreign policy actions.[1]

Alexander George has also cautioned against the implication that a decision-maker's belief system is 'a set of rules and recipes to be applied mechanically to the choice of action'.[2] In spite of these reservations, I believe that the cognitive approach to foreign-policy decision-making is both epistemologically sound and theoretically illuminating. To be sure, the scope of the 'linkages' between ideological beliefs and foreign policy decisions is logically restricted to those issue-areas that permit decision-makers to exercise their personal influence. In this respect, the Kissinger-Nixon period in US foreign policy presents obvious advantages, as they were committed to dominate personally almost all aspects of American foreign policy, from the policy-formulation to the implementation phase.

Kissinger's influence as a 'conceptualizer' on the basic design of US foreign policy was complementary to Nixon's perspective of foreign affairs as a higher calling of the politician, the area of activity in which the politician can become a true 'statesman'.[3] Kissinger's conservatism was rooted in the study of nineteenth century European diplomatic history and in his philosophical convictions; Nixon's political ideology - as expounded in his writings - was a crude version of the Realpolitik tradition of political realism, coupled with the customary expressions by US politicians about the virtues of American

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1. O. Holsti, 'Foreign policy decision-makers viewed psychologically'. Paper prepared for the American Political Science Association Meeting, San Francisco, California, 1975. Quoted in S.G. Walker, 'The Interface Between Beliefs and Behaviour', Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol 21, No 1, March 1977, 131
2. A. George, 196-7
3. On Nixon's views, see R.Evans and R.D. Novack, Nixon in the White House, Vintage Books, New York, 1972, 11; also his book, Six Crises, H. Allen, London, 1962, xvi

democracy and the benevolent effects of US power. His rise had been fuelled by a crude and even demagogic anticommunism which had led them automatically to defend the need for the US to maintain nuclear superiority over the USSR, and to support without question American interventionist policies in the Third World, particularly - though of course not exclusively - in Southeast Asia.[1] His strength as a leader lay in his tactical flexibility, in his willingness to adapt himself to new circumstances; his - and Kissinger's - main weakness was his inability to question the conservative implications of his 'realism', both domestically and internationally, which blocked ideological innovation, led to an ever-increasing cycle of centralization and secrecy, and to his eventual downfall.

Both Kissinger and Nixon recognized that the economic, strategic and political impact of the Vietnam war on the US,[2] and the changes in the international situation, made it imperative to adjust, at least tactically, to the new conditions. They 'realistically' accepted the need for a change of direction that - and this was a crucial point - would not imply a reassessment of their 'fundamental' ideology. Their response was characteri-

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1. On Nixon's notions of leadership, see R. Nixon, The Real War, Sidgwick & Jackson, London, 1981, 265-70; The Memoirs of Richard Nixon, Arrow Books, London, 1979, 110. In a 1968 interview, shortly before assuming office, he reaffirmed his conviction that 'it is only our [US] nuclear superiority that has preserved peace for our generation. Maintaining superiority is necessary in order to speak to the Soviet Union from a position of strength.' (Quoted by W.B. Husband, 'Soviet Perceptions of US "Positions of Strength" Diplomacy in the 1970s', World Politics, Vol 31, No 4, July 1979, 500-1) Nixon would have had US troops in Vietnam as early as 1954, when the French were surrounded at Dien Bien Phu. He had traditionally been an extreme exponent of the 'domino theory', who thought the war in Vietnam was being fought primarily between the US and the People's Republic of China, and who argued that Chinese aggression could reach as far as Australia if South Vietnam fell. See his Speech before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 16 1954. Also Speech of March 15 1965 (Congressional Record, US House of Representatives, September 2 1965, 21928-30), and his article 'Asia After Vietnam', Foreign Affairs, October 1967, 111-25

2. On the economic impact, see Noam Chomsky, For Reasons of State, Fontana, London, 1971, 61, 256; on the strategic impact, US Department of Defense: Statement by Secretary of Defense C.M. Clifford on the 1970 Defense Budget and Defense Program for FY 1970-1974, January 15 1969; also H.B. Moulton, From Superiority to Parity: The US and the Strategic Arms Race, 1961-1971, Greenwood Press, Connecticut, 1973, 284-5

stically conservative both at the domestic and the international levels: if the forces of change were rampant, it was the mission of the conservative to strengthen those of 'order'; if the hope for reform was widespread, it was all the more imperative to resist in the name of 'stability', 'authority', 'credibility' and the 'balance of forces'.[1] The central object of their foreign policy readjustment would be to reduce the scope of any devolution from the previously held American positions to the benefit of either major allies or adversaries, while reducing the costs of upholding what were seen as essential US interests. The international status quo would be preserved, but the burdens would be redistributed.

The perceived need for a tactical readjustment, however, led the Kissinger-Nixon team to introduce two important modifications into the traditional Cold War strategy of containment: in the first place, the new foreign policy design would seek to retain the essential assets of US power and influence at a low cost and with the acquiescence, rather than militant opposition, of America's principal rivals. Having become antagonists of one another, the USSR and China became potential - if limited - partners of the US. The 'structure of peace' - the protection of the international status quo - would then be based on the acceptance of the legitimate security interests of the great powers, and this necessarily implied that they should defer to each other's zones of hegemonial control over subordinate - i.e. 'Third World' - areas of the world. In the second place, in view of the tendencies towards super-power accommodation, 'interests' not 'ideological commitments' would now be the guiding criterion of US foreign policy,[2] and previous attempts to identify that policy with an 'American liberal mission' would be abandoned. To be sure, when Nixon and Kissinger talked about a world of 'interests' not 'ideologies', they referred to the legitimating aspect of ideology - 'liberalism' in the US and Marxism-Leninism in the USSR and China - both in the domestic and international arenas. The quest

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1. This was also Metternich's position in the face of upheaval. See Kissinger, A World Restored, 203-4
2. See Richard Nixon, A New Strategy for Peace, USGPO, Washington DC, February 18 1970, 5, and Shaping a Durable Peace, USGPO, Washington DC, May 3 1973, 41-3

for stability should not be confused with 'crusading' attempts to reform the international order; détente meant the acceptance by the US of the USSR's super-power status, the 'admission' of China to a new system of global equilibrium, and the preservation of overall US hegemony in the international system. The US government would not try to encourage 'democracy' in the 'Third World', nor would she display disapproval of 'friendly' authoritarian regimes; the USSR and China, on their part, would be expected to stop promoting revolution in the name of Marxist principles. In sum, the Nixon Administration set itself the task of converting its version of 'political realism' into the common currency of superpower exchanges. The Administration's aim would be - in Kissinger's words - 'to educate the American public in the complexities of the world we would have to manage', and to teach them 'the requirements of equilibrium',[1] not to mobilize them behind a vision of change. 'Creativity', therefore, was implicitly defined as no more, and no less, than the balance of power.

With these steps US foreign policy reached its 'maturity' as a conservative strategy for the preservation of the status quo. The Nixon-Kissinger 'stable structure of peace' can be seen as a new version of Kissinger's conservative 'legitimate order', that is, 'an international agreement about the nature of workable arrangements and about the permissible aims and methods of foreign policy'. This kind of 'order' does not make conflicts impossible, but it limits their scope: 'Wars may occur, but they will be fought in the name of the existing structure and the peace which follows will be justified as a better expression of the 'legitimate general consensus.'[2] Kissinger's 'system' gave containment an instrumental role within a strategy of superpower accommodation, which did not allow for the existence of 'revolutionary' powers and required that the USSR and China converge with the US in securing a new 'legitimacy'. This was thought to be feasible - firstly because, after several decades of upheavals, the USSR had acquired a stake in stability, and secondly because this 'commitment to stability' could be reinforced by a number of

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1. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, 981; The White House Years, 914
2. Kissinger, A World Restored, 1-2

agreements whose total effect would be to limit Soviet freedom of action, but at the same time redound to the USSR's advantage in other respects.[1] In short, the purpose of the policy would be to encourage the embourgeoisement of Soviet foreign policy.[2] In the case of China, the need to concede primacy to security considerations over revolutionary aspirations and to partake of stability would be even more compelling. The concern for self-sufficiency and internal consolidation and the growing threat of Soviet power, created enough incentives for a rapprochement with the US, a reduction of Marxist ideological zeal, and a willingness to stop calls for a worldwide crusade against 'imperialism'.

To be sure, Kissinger did not lose sight of the considerable differences between the conditions existing in nineteenth century Europe and the much more complex characteristics of the contemporary international system,[3] but his - and Nixon's - interpretations of the structural nature of the challenges and the responses needed were not essentially different from Metternich's: the new foreign policy formula embodied a conservative ideology of domination that reflected indifference to the weak, the desire to insulate foreign policy from domestic politics, and to minimize the role of the social element in politics and war. The preference for 'interests' above 'ideologies' and for the separation of domestic structures from foreign policy was exclusively reserved to the domain of superpowers' relationships, and it did not extend to other components of the international system. But Nixon and Kissinger - like Metternich before them - could not overcome the dilemmas of conservatism: they sought an order of restraint, yet their ideology led them to conduct a policy of generalized intervention. They wanted the communist powers to separate their domestic ideology and practices from

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1. See R. Nixon, The Emerging Structure of Peace, USGPO, Washington DC, February 9 1972, 16-25
2. A. Hartley, American Foreign Policy in the Nixon Era, Adelphi Paper No 110, IISS, London, Winter 1974-5, 23
3. Kissinger was frequently at pains to emphasize - despite all evidence to the contrary - that 'it simply isn't true that I was extremely influenced by Metternich'. See Kissinger, For the Record, 118; for his analysis of the peculiarities of contemporary international relations, see American Foreign Policy, 53-7

their external behaviour, yet their view that - as Kissinger put it - 'a domestic upheaval in any country can cause a major shift in international alignments',[1] led them to justify a 'precautionary' policy against the 'social' menace, for example, in Chile, against Allende, in Central America, against the reformist experiments of the 1970s, and in Iran - in support of the Shah's 'revolution from above'. 'Linkage' - the idea that the way in which the US responds to any local crisis ought to be related to, and determined by, its relation to the central East-West balance - was a recipe for indiscriminate interventionism and led inevitably to a doctrine of indivisible credibility. The aim of disengaging the US from the overexposure of the Cold War years could not be accomplished under these ideological premises.

This basic ideological framework had, in sum, the following foreign policy implications:[2]

(1) The aim of the new policy was the petrifaction of the international status quo - though the method of achieveing this would require a high degree of diplomatic flexibility. The preservation of US interests and hegemony would now demand a more explicit recognition of the USSR's sphere of influence and of China's global stature, with the US as the dominant actor and central manager of stability. As far as the US's main allies - Western Europe and Japan - were concerned, Nixon and Kissinger argued that the time had come for 'a more balanced alliance with our friends', for 'more equal partnerships based on a more balanced contribution of both resources and plans'.[3] As Hoffmann has pointed out, these were euphemisms for an economic offensive aimed at shoring up US hegemony by eliminating some of the advantages that the monetary system, and the post-1945 commercial arrangements, had given to Washington's allies: in the new era of foreign policy, US 'primacy' was 'to be maintained by a combination of greater subtlety and greater toughness, two ways of restoring flexibility'.[4]

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1. Kissinger, The White House Years, 68
2. To be discussed in more detail in Chapters 5 - 7
3. R. Nixon, Shaping a Durable Peace, 30-9
4. S. Hoffmann, Primacy or World Order, McGraw Hill, New York, 1978, 47. On the issue of alliance policy, see Hartley, American Foreign Policy in the Nixon Era, 18-31

(2) The 'redistribution of burdens' necessarily demanded a militarization of foreign policy towards the 'Third World', in the attempt to strengthen 'client states' in areas where US military deployments were to be reduced. This, in turn, implied more open American support for repressive regimes in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East.
(3) The concentration on the East-West balance of power and, in particular, its military aspects, to the detriment of North-South issues - which have a mainly social and economic dimension - gave the new foreign policy design an anachronistic character, depriving it of the ability to formulate any significant response to North-South issues and leaving it unprepared to confront new problems, such as the energy crisis, which could not be easily constrained within the narrow limits of traditional conceptions of superpower hegemony. In fact, the Nixon-Kissinger ideological framework embodied a one-dimensional view of power[1] as strategic-military power, which led them, on the one hand (as in Indochina) to overestimate the utility of force in the resolution of crises, and, on the other, to underestimate the significance and impact of social and economic transformations on the world scene.
(4) The attempt to combine American conventional military retrenchment without US political disengagement, demanded an enhancement of the role of nuclear weapons in American strategy, pushing strategic nuclear doctrine to a more explicit 'war-winning' position and away from the MAD-related premises of previous years.
(5) Despite protestation to the contrary, the attempt to sustain the international status quo not only was <u>not</u> incompatible with a policy of non-intervention, but in fact pushed the Nixon-Kissinger duet to uphold a doctrine of global 'linkage' and generalized credibility that made interventionism in the Third World a key element of policy.
(6) Finally, the downplaying of the legitimating role of 'liberal' foreign policy ideology within the US did not in fact lead Nixon and Kissinger to elaborate a new creative 'vision' for American policies abroad. They merely made explicit the conservative-realist assumptions of those policies.

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1. Windsor, 37

INNOVATION AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL SYSTEM

The twin processes of centralization and secrecy in decision-making which characterized the Nixon-Kissinger management of foreign policy were rooted in their notions on the nature of leadership. Their impatience with 'bureaucratic politics', the 'vagaries' of public opinion and the demands of 'consensus' politics reflected their tendency to identify 'creativity' with the inspired but lonely individual, and also their conviction that paralysis and rigidity were inherent in policy-making within the vast and complicated US government apparatus. Thus, in their view, centralization had to be imposed as a matter of urgency.

Their significant innovations in the methods of foreign-policy formulation did not, however, imply equally fundamental changes in the substance of US policies. The core of the new foreign policy apparatus[1] was a network of interagency committees, all chaired by Kissinger. These committees were used to force the foreign policy - national security agencies to produce a series of studies ('National Security Study Memoranda' or NSSMs) to be reported to the White House and provide a range of options on many issues.[2] After consultation and deliberation with Kissinger, sometimes following discussion at a Cabinet-level National Security Council meeting, Nixon would issue a 'National Security Decision Memorandum' (NSDM).

In the period between February and June 1969 the White House sent out 61 NSSMs assigning reviews of particular policies to various departments and inter-agency groups. By April 1971 the total had reached 126.[3] The topics ranged from the relatively specific to overall reviews of the US strategic posture and its world-wide commitments. The ostensible intention was to enlist

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1. For a comprehensive description of the new NSC system under Kissinger, see US Congress, House of Representatives, Sub-committee on National Security and International Operations: The NSC: New Role and Structure, USGPO, Washington DC, 1969; H.A. Kissinger, The National Security Council, Comments to the Sub-committee on National Security and International Operations, USGPO, Washington DC, 1970; H.A. Kissinger, The White House Years, 38-48

2. A complete list of topics covered is included in John P. Leacacos, 'Kissinger's Apparat', Foreign Policy, No 5, Winter, 1971-72, 3-27

3. I.M. Destler, Presidents, Bureaucrats and Foreign Policy, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1972, 133

the foreign policy bureaucracies in the discussion and critical analysis of the widest possible range of options for US policy. In theory, these studies could have become the basis of a thorough reappraisal of US foreign policy at various levels, leading to a reformulation of US interests and notions of national security in a non-conservative direction. In practice, however, despite the rigorous intellectual standards that were set for these studies,[1] they did not lead to ideological innovation in foreign policy, but exclusively - and not always - to tactical readjustments sometime reinforcing previously held US positions that contributed to increased political and military repression in the Third World,[2] to an escalation of the war in Southeast Asia,[3] or to the development of more 'flexible' war-making strategies in the nuclear field.[4] It is true that the studies in themselves could be extremely open-minded in the range of hypothetical options they proposed, but Nixon and Kissinger took the decisions, and they defined American national interests according to the same conservative ideological perceptions prevailing under previous administrations. In fact, Nixon and Kissinger eventually came to use the NSSM and the committee process to tie up the bureaucracy

1. For a description of the purposes and requirements set for the NSSMs, see R. Nixon, A New Strategy for Peace, 12. Unfortunately only a handful of these studies are available for public scrutiny, though the substance of some is known through secondary sources.

2. See NSSM-39 on Southern Africa, August 15 1969, published as The Kissinger Study on Southern Africa, by Spokesman Books, London, 1975. What appears obvious throughout this study is the complete lack of awareness or concern over the aspirations of the non-white people of southern Africa. The exploitative nature of the Apartheid system did not fall within the NSC's framework of analysis. See also NSDM-93 on policy towards the Allende regime in Chile, in Seymour Hersh, Kissinger: The Price of Power, Faber & Faber, London, 1983, 294-5

3. NSSM-1 on Vietnam made it clear that the war in the South could not be won without continued US presence, at least in the air, no matter what improvement could be introduced in the fighting abilities of the South Vietnamese Army. The full text is printed in the Congressional Record, USGPO, May 10 1972, 4975-5066

4. For an account of the contents of NSSM-3, entitled Military Posture, see John Newhouse, Cold Dawn: The Story of SALT, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1973, 149, and Lynn E. Davis, Limited Nuclear Options: Deterrence and the New American Doctrine, Adelphi Paper No 121, IISS, London, Winter 1975-6, 3

on issues where their own minds were already made up, or where they wanted to delay the decision, by simply ordering more studies.

Thus, ironically, the Nixon-Kissinger NSC system evolved into practically the opposite of the 'multiple advocacy' model designed during the initial phase of the Administration: the two chief officials not only made their own decisions based on their own analyses, but often kept the bureaucracy in the dark concerning those decisions, with sometimes very harmful effects on the working of government.[1] What the Nixon-Kissinger organizational innovations showed was that, though rationality and a formal commitment to policy reappraisal may be important steps in the direction of policy modification, they are not sufficient to assure that ideological innovation will take place.[2] The retention by the Nixon-Kissinger team of the fundamental ideological framework of their predecessors did not allow them to transform their successful control of - or disregard for - the bureaucracy into mechanisms geared to innovation in the substance of US policies. Moreover, their methods of centralization and secrecy ran counter to the American institutional traditions of intra-governmental pluralism and to public and Congressional sentiment. Although these methods facilitated a number of remarkable diplomatic initiatives,[3] they also contributed to the crises that eventually destroyed the Nixon Presidency in 1974.

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1. Two areas negatively affected by the Nixon-Kissinger centralization policies were those of intelligence and arms control. In both fields Kissinger's own expectations became crucial for determining the framework for analysis, particularly of controversial issues such as SALT, and his rigid control of the estimating process through the NSC machinery eroded the critical independence of the intelligence agencies. See Lawrence Freedman US Intelligence and the Soviet Strategic Threat, Macmillan, London, 1977, 60; also Gerard C. Smith, Doubletalk: The Story of SALT, Doubleday, New York, 1980
2. Brennen, 276
3. According to Roger Morris, without Nixon's independence of action, 'his greatest achievements in the White House would probably have been impossible; with it, the tragedies of his presidency became more numerous'. Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy, Harper & Row, New York, 1977, 67

CHAPTER 5

THE NEW 'LEGITIMATE' ORDER

THE MEANING OF SUPERIORITY : THE US AND DETENTE

It is undeniably true that in The Necessity for Choice, published in 1960, Kissinger had reproached those who saw 'in every change of [Soviet] tone a change of heart'. He also decried 'the persistence with which it has been claimed that the economic needs of the Soviet Union would impose a more conciliatory policy on it', and disapproved of the fact that 'whatever aspect of the Soviet system they have considered, many in the West have sought to solve our policy dilemma by making the most favorable assumptions about Soviet trends'.[1] In later years the adversaries of the détente process strongly criticized him for his presumed 'new attitude' towards the USSR, arguing that it 'revealed how much his understanding of the Soviet system had changed since he took up residence in Washington'.[2]

To be sure, the fundamental hostility that both Nixon and Kissinger had previously displayed towards the Soviet Union gave way, after 1969, to a different, much more complex and subtle posture. This was not, however, the product of a 'monumental piece of fatuous misjudgement',[3] but the result of a carefully crafted, highly sophisticated political response to new realities of the international system. The policy of détente was indeed basically flawed, but not for the reasons most of its critics or sceptics usually put forward. It was not conceived as

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1. Kissinger, The Necessity for Choice, 191-203. And in Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, published in 1957 (W.W. Norton, New York) Kissinger expressed his anxiety about 'peaceful coexistence', arguing that it meant for Soviet leaders nothing more than 'the most effective offensive tactic' and 'the best means to subvert the existing structure by means other than all out war' - all with the purpose of keeping 'provocation below the level which might produce a final showdown', (142-3, 350)
2. See, for example, Theodore Draper, 'Appeasement and Détente', in J.R. Schlesinger et al, Defending America, Basic Books Inc., New York, 1977, 3-21
3. L. Labedz, 'USA and the World Today: Kissinger and After', Survey, Vol 22, No 1, Winter, 1976, 2

a consequence of a loss of the 'sense of reality'[1] by its principal architects, nor can it meaningfully be explained simply as an 'artifice of statecraft...consciously managed into being by policymakers, often rather against the grain of political ideological expectations in their constituencies'.[2] For even though the impulse given to détente personally by Nixon and Kissinger was crucial, the policy was rooted in a number of facts that had transformed significantly the international landscape and on which US leaders could not possibly turn their backs. Thus the question why did Secretary of State Kissinger pursue a policy which Professor Kissinger had denounced in advance[3] is easy to answer: he showed, once in office, a recognition of changing circumstances that did not lead him to alter his basic beliefs and objectives, but to adapt the tactics of US foreign policy to the new conditions in which it had to operate.

In essence, détente was a policy for an age of US-Soviet strategic parity and Sino-Soviet schism. It played on the profound ambiguities of Soviet policy, torn between its unwillingness to tolerate an international status quo under US hegemony, and its attraction towards the possible rewards of 'equal security' and the American recognition of the USSR as an 'emerging superpower', with legitimate interests and areas of influence. The policy was a means for arresting the erosion of US power and the decline in the US's ability to conduct 'tough' global diplomacy, particularly in the Third World. Its failures reflected ideological misconceptions about the nature of contemporary social and political conflicts, not unwarranted 'conciliation' on the part of US leaders. As Kissinger explained:

> Until the early Fifties [the US] had an atomic monopoly enabling us to substitute strategic power for conventional inferiority without fear of retaliation. Until

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1. This quotation is taken from one of the most forceful cases against détente, made in a statement prepared by a group of students of Soviet and international affairs, reprinted for the use of the Committee on Armed Services, US Senate: Détente: An Evaluation, USGPO, Washington DC, 1974, 24
2. C. Bell, 'Détente and the American National Interest', in R. Rosecrance (ed), America as an Ordinary Country, 40
3. See G. Warren Nutter, Kissinger's Grand Design, Foreign Affairs Study 27, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington DC, 1975, 11

> the Sixties we were in a position of such superiority that in a first strike we could probably have destroyed the Soviet retaliatory force, and the Soviets had no comparable capability. In any event the Soviets, calculating the worst-case scenario, would not risk it. Until the early Seventies, in fact, the worst-case scenario analysis of the Soviets was bound to be a significant restraint on adventurism. Therefore, our loss of strategic superiority was a strategic revolution even if the Soviets did not achieve a superiority of their own. For that, to some extent, freed the Soviet capacity for regional intervention.[1]

The arrival of 'parity' implied 'a revolutionary change in the assumptions on which the West's security had been based in the entire post-war period',[2] and this was the case not only in the European context, but most importantly of all in the Third World.

The 'revolutionary' impact of the US's loss of strategic superiority was twofold: on the one hand, it eroded - though it did not totally eliminate - previous Soviet inhibitions to project military power in turbulent Third World areas, and, on the other, it gave impetus to the struggles of anti-Western movements fighting against the military, political and economic dominance of the US and its main allies.[3] Détente was then the product of the constraints induced by the new strategic environment and by the Vietnam experience on the US leaders' capacity to intervene militarily abroad. In my view, it is a serious misreading of the situation to argue that 'as it nursed its [Indochinese] wounds', the US 'became convinced of the folly of military intervention as a means of promoting great-power interests'.[4] Rather, what happened was that US leaders were temporarily unable to give to

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1. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, 1176 (emphasis mine). Also, W. Slocombe, The Political Implications of Strategic Parity, Adelphi Paper No 77, IISS, London, May 1971, 5. The publicly announced Soviet military budget rose from 12.8 million roubles in 1965 to 13.4 in 1966, to 14.5 in 1967, 16.7 in 1968, 17.7 in 1969, and 17.9 in 1970, an increase of 40% which does not include hidden allocations to the Soviet military (T.W. Wolfe, Soviet Power and Europe 1945-1970, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1970, 429)
2. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, 258
3. In Indochina, the Portuguese colonies in Africa, and Latin America, for example
4. L. Freedman, 'Requiem for Détente ?', World Politics, February 1980, 41

the effective, practical use of military force the priority status as an instrument of policy that it had enjoyed throughout the post-war period. Nixon and Kissinger saw that in the prevailing conditions there was no support for high-risk, interventionist policies; their worry was that 'the assault on our foreign policy would collapse <u>all</u> our commitments',[1] and a way had to be found to preserve vital interests by diplomacy instead of force. The policy of détente, which included a mixture of incentives and penalties, would be used to push the USSR gradually towards accepting the American conception of the status quo, aiming at 'an end to the constant probing for openings and the testing of every equilibrium'.[2]

This was the crucial weakness of the policy of détente as conceived by Nixon and Kissinger: their assumption that a 'mellowing' of Soviet foreign policy would necessarily be reflected in a more 'manageable' Third World - an illusion arising from the conservatives' difficulty in understanding the role of the social element in politics and the roots of contemporary revolutions. In the first place, the Soviet Union was not prepared to concede continued Western domination of the Third World - though the Kremlin leadership was ready to be <u>cautious</u> so as not to jeopardize the benefits of détente. In the second place, and more importantly, whilst Soviet military and political support is sometimes a very significant factor in Third World conflicts, it is not Moscow which generates or controls events in these areas: the legacy of colonialism, the struggle against dictatorship and repression and for national liberation and democracy, the impact of economic underdevelopment and of social inequalities

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1. See interview with Kissinger by B.J. Wattenberg, 'Is there a Crisis of Spirit in the West ?', <u>Public Opinion</u>, May-June 1978, 6-21. And in <u>The White House Years</u>, Kissinger defined the US's problem in terms of strengthening security 'in an international system less dependent for stability on permanent American intervention' (765). In <u>Years of Upheaval</u> he clarified the point thus: 'The...transformation of the strategic balance should have forced a reappraisal of the strategy of relying on the threat of general nuclear war even to protect Europe <u>and certainly other areas; and it should have led to major efforts to strengthen local and regional conventional forces</u>. Unfortunately, in the early seventies the civil strife over Vietnam prevented a rethinking of old verities just when it became most urgent.' (259) (emphasis mine)

2. Kissinger, <u>The White House Years</u>, 1143

constitute some of the most relevant factors for explaining Third World upsurges. These realities, and not Soviet 'adventurism', are at the root of the American dilemma in the underprivileged areas of the globe, and these realities made a policy of 'linkage' unfeasible. As Kissinger articulated it:

> Events in different parts of the world, in our view, were related to each other; even more so, Soviet conduct in different parts of the world. We proceeded from the premise that to separate issues into distinct compartments would encourage the Soviet leaders to believe that they could use cooperation in one area as a safety valve while striving for unilateral advantages elsewhere. This was unacceptable.[1]

But 'linkage' had two basic drawbacks. First, what US leaders described as Third World challenges to American security - such as, for instance, the Vietnamese revolution - were not of Moscow's making nor could they be controlled by the Kremlin: a policy of 'punishing' Moscow in order to threaten Hanoi, though not superfluous, was little productive. Secondly, for international or domestic reasons, the 'punishment' could not always be delivered.[2] In sum, in spite of their expressed wish to establish a less undifferentiated hierarchy of US interests, the doctrine of 'linkage' pushed Nixon and Kissinger inexorably towards putting US global credibility at stake in every conflict.

The Nixon-Kissinger attempt to construct a more predictable world system of bipolar management was also plagued with ambiguities. On one hand they both realized that the late 1960s had marked, at least temporarily, the end of American predominance based on overwhelming nuclear and economic power, and were prepared to reorientate the central aim of US diplomacy from containment through supremacy - by dictating the terms of 'stability'

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1. Kissinger, The White House Years, 129

2. Nixon described one such incident in his Memoirs: 'When Kissinger raised the question [to Dobrynin] of the Communist violations of the ceasefire in Cambodia [in 1973], the Soviet scornfully asked what we expected, now that we had no negotiating leverage because of the bombing cutoff imposed by Congress. Kissinger tried to be as menacing as he could, even though he knew Dobrynin was right. "There should be no illusion that we will forget who put us in this uncomfortable position", he [Kissinger] said. "In that case", Dobrynin replied, "you should go after Senator Fulbright, not us."' The Memoirs of Richard Nixon, 888-9

to the USSR - to containment through 'equilibrium' - based on détente and 'equal security'. Kissinger was sometimes even prepared to consider the possibility that the new relaxation of tensions might indicate 'the beginning of a new phase in Soviet policy',[1] and to argue that, though internal change should not be made a condition for negotiations, it was itself a condition that might evolve from them: changes in Soviet society had already occurred, and more would come.[2] But on the other hand Nixon's and Kissinger's inability to elaborate an alternative view of US interests in the Third World, and to redefine the requirements of American security in terms other than through the continuous exercise of hegemony over those areas, together with their indecision as to the meaning of the new phase of Soviet 'geopolitical expansion' did not allow them to break ideologically with the premises of containment based on American strategic superiority. Thus, Kissinger argued that détente was necessary <u>because</u> the Soviet Union had entered the phase of imperial expansion,[3] <u>but</u> that the US would 'not accept Soviet military expansion of any kind'.[4]

The American leaders' ambivalence towards détente was closely connected with the problem of the political meaning and implications of strategic 'superiority'. The controversy about what is 'superiority' in strategic terms and what it represents is usually referred to cases where war has already been assumed to have broken out; and it is frequently pointed out that since both sides - given the size of their respective nuclear arsenals - can destroy each other many times over, superiority makes no sense.[5] But this totally ignores the significance of <u>political perceptions</u> in the relationship between the superpowers and the importance

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1. Kissinger, <u>The White House Years</u>, 1209
2. Kissinger, <u>American Foreign Policy</u>, 172
3. See <u>The New York Times</u>, 21 December 1975. Interview with Dr Kissinger
4. <u>The New York Times</u>, 22 December 1975
5. This is what Kissinger meant when he said in 1974, in answer to a question at a press conference: 'What in the name of God is strategic superiority ? What is the significance of it at this level of numbers ? What do you do with it ?' This statement, Kissinger now argues, reflected 'fatigue and exasperation, not analysis', and he 'regrets' having made it. See Kissinger, <u>For the Record</u>, 213

that American decision-makers have traditionally given to nuclear weapons as a political instrument in various kinds of crisis. From this perspective, the possession of a margin of superiority is seen as increasing US bargaining power and leverage by the use of threats of nuclear attack against local, non-nuclear, Third World countries, or against the power perceived as encouraging the challenges, namely the USSR.[1]

In the Cold War years, up until the mid-1960s, the essential requirement of strategic stability in American eyes was a continuing degree of US superiority in all realms of strategic nuclear power over the USSR. By establishing an overwhelming advantage in missile power the US hoped to show its ability to maintain its commitments even at a time when it was becoming increasingly vulnerable to direct Soviet attacks. This placed Soviet leaders in a dilemma in the event of war: whether to retaliate against American cities and so risk the destruction of their country, or else to confess that their bluff had been called.[2] The Cuban crisis was the culmination of the US's efforts to achieve decisive strategic superiority;[3] but it also - and paradoxically -

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1. As Mandelbaum notes, short of 'victory' in a nuclear exchange, asymmetries in the nuclear arsenals the United States and the Soviet Union deploy 'can lead to significant consequences even when both sides possess the capacity for the assured destruction of the other'. (The Nuclear Revolution, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981, 124) This is because, in Luttwak's words, 'The political utility and military effectiveness of a given structure of armed forces exist in different worlds: one, the world of appearances, impressions, and the culturally determined value judgements of international politics; the other, the world of physical reality in actual warfare.' (E.N. Luttwak, 'The missing dimension of US defense policy: force, perception and power', in Donald C. Daniel (ed) International Perceptions of the Superpower Military Balance, Praeger, New York, 1978, 28

2. See Philip Windsor, Germany and the Management of Détente, Chatto & Windus (for the IISS), London, 1971, 12, 15-6

3. General Maxwell Taylor, former Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, has expressed doubts that American nuclear superiority played a role in the 1962 Cuban crisis, arguing that it was US conventional naval superiority in the Caribbean that proved decisive (International Herald Tribune, 13 October 1982). While not denying the role of US naval forces in the crisis and the alternatives they provided for a flexible use of power by American decision-makers, the Soviets perceived their humiliation as directly related to American nuclear preponderance - as shown by their accelerated, post-1962 development of the USSR nuclear arsenal.

instilled a greater degree of caution into the American leaders' attempt to impose their notion of strategic stability upon the Soviet Union. The Kremlin leaders' decision, after Cuba, to reach nuclear parity with the US, the massive American intervention in Indochina after 1965, and its impact upon the US defence budget changed the strategic context. What concerned US leaders about this strategic 'revolution'[1] - particularly once it became clear that the intervention in Indochina had gone disastrously wrong - were the effects that the change in the nuclear balance would have on American willingness to take risks in local situations, and the new opportunities that 'parity' had opened up to the USSR to play a more active role in the Third World.[2]

The erosion of US strategic superiority and of the US government's political ability to intervene militarily abroad made it imperative to implement a change of course in American foreign policy, which materialized in the process of détente. From their architects' point of view, détente represented a breathing space;[3] it embodied the search for a political understanding that would make purely strategic considerations less relevant, at the same time creating opportunities for 'taming' Soviet power. The American view of strategic stability based on US overall superiority and willingness to dictate - if necessary - the terms of the relationship to the Soviet Union was not abandoned as an objective, but it was - in Windsor's words - 'downgraded in its heuristic importance'.[4] Thus, in the American view, the success

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1. The extent to which these changes actually transformed the strategic environment, and the question whether the US now came to occupy a position of relative inferiority compared with the USSR, are matters of debate. But as Lawrence Freedman puts it, military power is 'in the eyes of the beholder', and it is a fact that in the early 1970s 'the impression grew [in the US] that the Soviet Union was seizing the strategic initiative'. (The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy, 368, 346)

2. Blechman and Kaplan have shown that on at least nineteen occasions since World War II the US has sought to use nuclear weapons as instruments of policy in crisis situations in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America, where in two cases US bombers have been sent to reassure allies. (Force without War, 47-9). See also Fred Halliday, The Making of the Second Cold War, Verso, London, 1983, 46-80

3. Although he did not use these terms, the basic notion is implicit in Kissinger's explanations of the meaning of détente. See American Foreign Policy, 143-76, 299-323

4. Windsor, Germany and the Management of Détente, 21

or failure of détente would ultimately be measured both by the degree to which the USSR accepted 'restraint' as a guiding principle of foreign policy in a new status quo, and also by the satisfaction of US expectations about the 'manageability' of the Third World. To put it differently, the agreement or refusal by the rest of the world to behave in the manner which the American architects of the policy hoped would constitute the real test of détente.

A NEW CORRELATION OF FORCES : THE USSR, CHINA AND THE INTERNATIONAL STATUS QUO

The Soviet move to détente was basically - though not exclusively - the result of a conviction of the inherent long-term strength of the Soviet system, and also of a perception of a gradual shift in the 'international correlation of forces' in favour of the USSR. According to Soviet writers, the concept 'correlation of forces' differs fundamentally from the concept 'balance of power'. While the balance of power can be the product of deliberate policy, the 'correlation of forces' represents 'balance' determined by social and historical processes of which the policy of states is only a component. The 'correlation of forces' constitutes the basic structure upon which the interstate system rests; it can be affected to a certain extent by state policy, but, in general, state policies are shaped by the socio-economic, technological, military, and political variables that, together, constantly transform the 'correlation of forces'.[1] Since Soviet leaders felt that the main reason for the US acceptance of détente was a shift in the 'correlation of forces', particularly military forces, to the USSR's advantage, the Soviets naturally expected that further movements in this direction would encourage additional accommodation of Soviet interests.[2]

Despite their newly-gained self-confidence, however, the fact is that the Soviet leaders' move to détente also reflected a perception of weakness. As in the Americans' case, their attitude was ambivalent: on the one hand, there was a growing belief that the USSR was becoming stronger, and this, by implication, meant that Soviet policy would necessarily become more assertive and that conflicts with the main pillar of the status quo - the US - would be more likely. On the other, the Soviet leadership's consciousness that the USSR confronted a number of serious domestic and international problems pushed the Kremlin in the direction of cooperation rather than con-

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1. Vernon V. Aspaturian, 'Soviet Global Power and the Correlation of Forces', Problems of Communism, May-June 1980, 1-18
2. On the Soviet view of Détente, see Walter Laqueur, 'Détente: Western and Soviet Interpretations', Survey, Vol 19, No 3, Summer 1973, 74-87; L.S. Hulett, Decade of Détente: Shifting Definitions and Denouement, University Press of America, Washington DC, 1983

frontation. These realities of the Soviet system allowed Nixon and Kissinger to conceive a policy of 'incentives' that would inevitably have to be reciprocated by Soviet political and military 'restraint'.

Kissinger was initially convinced that the Soviets needed a 'relaxation of tensions' at least as much as the US, and that a period of international tranquillity was bound to present more problems to the Soviet Union than to America, 'since its cohesion was in part maintained by the constant evocation of an external danger'. In his view, a 'long period of peace' would 'unleash more centrifugal tendencies in the totalitarian states than in the industrial democracies'. 'Time', he concluded, 'was not necessarily on the Soviet side.'[1] It is clear from this assessment that Kissinger did not adequately appreciate - until events forced the realization upon him - the extent to which US domestic upheavals and strategic overextension, the impetus of Third World revolutionary struggles, and the growth of Soviet military power had opened up in the 1970s a period of international instability and Soviet geopolitical ascendancy that placed the US in a more exposed and vulnerable position than its main rival. Détente at the bilateral level could only be sustained on the basis of a new global balance of power, in which the USSR would ask to play a larger role. American leaders were then faced with only two options: either to accept willingly an expanded Soviet global role or to adopt a posture of generalized containment, handicapped by the reality of an increasingly unfavorable military equation.

Of course, this dilemma was not yet commonly perceived in such clear-cut terms in the early 1970s, partly because Soviet policy was still undergoing a process of redefinition. Four factors played a dominant role in the Kremlin's decision to seek a rapprochement with the US. In the first place, a significant factor was Moscow's extraordinary anxiety about the People's Republic of China at the start of the decade, and their concern with the US approach to the PRC. Subsequently, as the limits of the Sino-US relationship became clearer Soviet fears receded, but these anxieties did play a role in the initial Soviet push towards détente.[2] A second factor was the recognition that the difficulties

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1. Kissinger, The White House Years, 801
2. ibid, 547-8, 810-23

of the Soviet economy justified a much more vigorous effort to obtain Western credits and technology to overcome the bottlenecks of Soviet development in these areas.[1] Thirdly, the Kremlin leadership's interest in détente was fuelled by the arms control issue. While the quantitative momentum in the nuclear arms race was undoubtedly on the USSR's side, the American lead in such fields as ABM and MIRV technology was big enough to persuade the Soviet national security establishment of the need to make some concessions to prevent the US from exploiting its advantage.[2] Finally, the progress of Westpolitik, the Soviet normalization with West Germany, also contributed to facilitating an opening to the US. The climate of relaxation was improved by the unfolding of Soviet and East European political and economic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany, which also made more feasible the European security conference, long sought after by the Kremlin.

All these motives for a détente with the US notwithstanding, the USSR's accommodation with the West did not represent an acceptance of the status quo or of restrictions prohibiting Soviet international advances. The Soviets were indeed interested in the economic benefits of détente, but the political price they were prepared to pay for these was limited, and it certainly did not include the 'acquiescence' in the US's predominance in the international system. The Kremlin leadership perceived détente essentially as the product not of Soviet weakness but of Soviet strength; the most they were willing to consider in the name of détente was how to find less dangerous ways to modify - not to preserve - the international status quo.[4] As a Soviet analyst put it in 1973, 'The purpose of détente [is] to make the process of international change as painless as possible.'[5] This objective, of course, was in total contradiction with the Nixon-Kissinger view of détente as a device to protect, rather than transform, the status quo.

1. Kissinger, The White House Years, 1142
2. D.K. Simes, 'The Death of Détente ?', International Security, Vol 5, No 1, Summer 1980, 5
3. H. Gelman, The Politburo's Management of Its American Problem, Rand Report No R2707-NA, Santa Monica, California, 1981, 41. Also, W.G. Hyland, Soviet-American Relations: A New Cold War ? Rand Report No R2763-FF/RC, Santa Monica, California, May 1981, 24
4. Simes, 10
5. A. Bovin, Pravda, November 20 1973 (quoted Simes, 11)

The problem was not that Nixon and Kissinger had blindly succumbed to 'wishful thinking'[1] and 'delusions'[2] about Soviet power. They had formulated a policy which, in the circumstances, offered at least the possibility of preserving the sinews of the American hegemonial position in the world through a complex transition period, and at most the promise of obtaining the co-operation of an 'emerging superpower' in the 'management of order'. The difficulties lay in the American leaders' unwillingness to reconcile themselves - even if reluctantly - to at least a limited expansion of the USSR's sphere of influence, above all in the Third World. The recognition that the impressive increases in Soviet strength had changed the strategic environment was not accompanied by the admission that this necessarily implied a more assertive political presence by the USSR in Third World conflicts. In theory, Nixon and Kissinger knew that a 'place' had to be found for the USSR's new ambitions; in practice, however, their aim was to 'freeze' the international status quo, enticing the Soviets into accepting this deal by the attractions of massive economic assistance. At a minimum, détente could induce the Soviets to be more cautious - out of fear of losing its benefits. At best, it could lead them to see some of the advantages of stability, including a formal recognition of their Eastern European sphere of influence.[3]

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1. L. Labedz, 'The Politics of Survival', Survey, Spring 1980, 43
2. R.W. Tucker, 'America in Decline: the Foreign Policy of Maturity Foreign Affairs, Vol 58, No 3, 1980, 472
3. This was the main thrust behind Helmut Sonnenfeldt (Kissinger's assistant at the State Department)'s polemical remarks in March 1976, when he argued that 'The Soviets have been inept. They have not been able to bring the attractions that past imperial powers have brought to their conquests...They have not brought the ideological, legal, cultural, architectural, organizational and other values and skills that characterized the British, French, and German adventures...The Soviets' inability to acquire loyalty in Eastern Europe is an unfortunate historical failure, because Eastern Europe is within their scope and area of natural interest...There is no way to prevent the emergence of the Soviet Union as a superpower. What we can do is affect the way in which that power is developed and used. Not only can we balance it in the traditional sense, but we can affect its usage - and that is what détente is all about...We seek to influence the emergence of the Soviet imperial power by making the base more natural and organic so that it will not remain founded on sheer power alone.' See US National Security Doctrine Vis-a-Vis Eastern Europe. The 'Sonnenfeldt Doctrine', Hearings before the US House of Representatives, Subcommittee on International Security and Scientifc Affairs, April 12 1976, USGPO, Washington DC, 1976, 41-4

The difficulties arising from conflicting US-Soviet perceptions of the meaning of détente were compounded by the Chinese analysis of the process. Despite Nixon's and Kissinger's awareness of the erosion of US geopolitical supremacy, they remained convinced that in the changed international context America was still operating from a base of great residual strength, that in the new 'triangular' balance it could play a dominant role, and that the Chinese leadership realized that its interests in a rapprochement with the US were more urgent and overwhelming than Washington's.[1]

Not surprisingly, the Chinese view of the origins and purposes of the 'opening' to the US was significantly different. The primary catalyst of the new Chinese foreign policy was a perception of American weakness rather than of Soviet strength.[2] During the period of the Cultural Revolution until 1968 Chinese foreign policy was grounded on the assumption that the US was determined to extend its economic and political hegemony by the application of military power for the foreseeable future. While the USSR was seen as a 'revisionist' power which betrayed 'people's wars', it was not considered an 'imperialist' power in its own right. A series of events transformed this analysis and the turning point came in 1968 in the wake of the Vietnamese 'Tet' offensive and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. The US was seen as unable any longer to pursue the aggressive expansionist policy which had characterized American international behaviour since World War II, particularly in the Third World where it was now on the defensive.

The other crucial assumption of the new Chinese foreign policy was the reappraisal of the USSR as an 'imperialist' power in its own right which, at this particular stage of history, was advancing at a time when US imperialism was in serious decline. The new international situation made it imperative to exploit the contradictions between the two superpowers, and to do so by extending an opening to the US. As Chou En-lai put it in a 1971 briefing: 'When the US got stuck in Vietnam, the Soviet revisionist

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1. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, 51
2. G. O'Leary, The Shaping of Chinese Foreign Policy, Croom Helm, London, 1978, 216

embraced the opportunity to extend vigorously their sphere of influence in Europe and the Middle East. The US imperialists cannot but improve their relations with China to combat the Soviet revisionists.'[1] Chinese spokesmen described global politics in progressively less tranquil terms, but both the short-term and long-term consequences of this situation were deemed positive for the PRC.[2] In the short run, superpower competition in more vital and vulnerable spheres of interest than Asia would provide China with the breathing space required to restore an economy and polity shattered by years of turmoil. In the long run, both superpowers could be expected to throw away substantial parts of their resources in an increasing competition which neither could expect to win decisively.

The Chinese leaders therefore wanted and needed an intensified competition between the US and the USSR as a key element of their foreign policy strategy, and they were convinced that in this confrontation China could not, and would not, play a decisive role. The US's strategic decline and the USSR's geo-political momentum made it necessary to adopt a more flexible attitude towards Washington and to warn American leaders where their true interests lay. Only the US had the power to stop Soviet advances, and it was essential that American leaders respond forcefully to the Soviet challenge.

There were, then, significant differences between American and Chinese perceptions of the impact of China's new perspective on world affairs. First, for the Chinese leaders the US opening to China was an unequivocal sign of American weakness; less the prelude to a diplomatic 'revolution' than a hopeful indication that Washington had understood the nature of the Soviet threat and would firmly act against it. For Nixon and Kissinger, on the contrary, the rapprochement with China was seen as a master-stroke in the creation of a triangular relationship that would strengthen stability by involving the USSR in the 'management of order'. Secondly, US leaders' perceptions of the new strategic equation gave China an important role to play in the containment

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1. Quoted by M.B. Yahuda, China's Role in World Affairs, Croom Helm, London, 1978, 228
2. L.W. Pye, 'Dilemmas for America in China's Military Modernization, International Security, Spring 1979, 3-17

of the USSR. The Chinese, however, were less sure about the imminence of Soviet threats to China, and considered their contribution to a global 'balance' as of a very limited character.[1] Thirdly, Nixon and Kissinger interpreted the new equilibrium as a mechanism which would help to control and reduce the level of confrontation with the USSR through a mixture of incentives and penalties and the skilful manipulation of triangular diplomacy. The Chinese, however, expected the US to adopt a much more belligerent attitude towards the Soviets. For their part, the Kremlin leaders, faced with the revived dangers of a two-front confrontation and of a coalescing of rivals on both its Eastern and Western frontiers, were more disposed to strengthen their links with the US; but the Soviets came to make a US willingness to isolate and weaken China a crucial test of détente - a test that the American could simply not accept. Finally, Nixon and Kissinger placed high hopes in the help the PRC could give them on the Vietnam issue, but the Chinese were not in fact able to deliver much on that account even if they wanted to, for their influence on Hanoi was limited. In sum, despite the changes in China's position brought about by the new foreign policy of the early 1970s, the Chinese did not accept the American conception of equilibrium based on détente and triangular diplomacy, nor were they prepared to let themselves be used as a pawn in the struggle between the superpowers. Rather, they envisaged a return to the Soviet-American Cold War, with China playing a secondary role and concentrating on its own internal development.

Thus, the Nixon-Kissinger view of the new equilibrium and its political and strategic implications was based on an evaluation of the international correlation of forces, which was not shared by the US's main antagonists. In these conditions, the policy of détente could not but remain at the stage of a tactical reprieve, failing ultimately to contain the deterioration of the US-dominated international status quo.

1. To be sure, Chinese writings conceded that some Soviet deployments in Asia are directed against China, but they also contended that many of these forces remain primarily intended to threaten Japan and the US. In addition, Chinese discussions of the 'inevitability of war' refer almost exclusively to armed conflict not between the USSR and China but between 'imperialist' states or their surrogates, with the PRC playing a peripheral role, or being uninvolved in such conflagrations. See J.D. Pollack, 'Chinese Global Strategy and Soviet Power', Problems of Communism, Vol XXX, No 1, January-February 1981, 54-5

THE FRAGILE EQUILIBRIUM

The end of the era of American strategic supremacy happened to coincide not only with the end of Soviet strategic inferiority but, more importantly, also with the beginning of an era of Soviet geopolitical expansion and a renewed period of socio-political turmoil and revolutionary **upheavals** in the Third World. The relentless Soviet drive for strategic parity was bound to undermine the American quest for 'equilibrium' - on US terms - as the Kremlin's perception of the world 'correlation of forces' and of the dynamics of international instability differed fundamentally from that of the US leaders. In particular, the Kissinger-Nixon 'linkage' assumption that the USSR could, or would, help the US maintain stability in the Third World had no basis either in actual fact or in anything the Soviet leaders had committed themselves to for the sake of détente.[1] In the first place, the whole theory of Soviet-American cooperation to 'manage' Third World crises depended upon the continued primacy of the superpowers, when in fact Kissinger himself had repeatedly argued - correctly, in my view - that this power and authority were gradually waning on both sides.[2] Secondly, the Soviet leaders made at all times no secret of their view that détente did not mean an end to Soviet-American competition in the Third World, only an agreement that such conflicts should not be allowed to escalate to dangerous levels.[3]

The Nixon-Kissinger strategy of equlibrium sought an overarching bargain in which Soviet expansion would in practice

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1. Thus, the statement that 'the Soviet and Warsaw Pact approach to détente suffers from the most fundamental, intrinsic contradictions', for it is 'simply inconceivable to any reasonable mind to advocate reconciliation, accommodation and agreements in an adversary relationship, while at the same time presenting détente as a manifestation of a policy to shift power relations in favor of Socialism', only shows its author's profound misunderstanding of Marxist doctrine and its role in 'legitimation' See F.A.M. Alting von Geusau, 'Détente after Helsinki', The Year Book of World Affairs, Stevens & Sons, London, 1978, 8-22
2. Kissinger, American Foreign Policy, 59-90
3. See, for example, V. Kortunov, 'The Leninist Policy of Peaceful Coexistence and Class Struggle', International Affairs (Moscow), May 1979, 91

be contained by a number of political, economic, and military arrangements, reinforced by the political and strategic implications for Moscow of the US opening to Peking. The global emergence of the USSR in the late 60s and early 70s was, however, a double and paradoxical phenomenon. As Windsor explains, the Soviet Union's global presence is 'a demonstration of her **strength**, but also an indicator of her weakness'.[1] The 'bipolar' system of the 50s and 60s was based on the power of <u>one</u> country, the US; and the emergence of the USSR as a global power in the early 70s - one whose military strength was actually a function of her weakness in other spheres - rather than confirming 'bipolarity' <u>challenged it</u>. Soviet strategic power, coupled with the USSR's structural weaknesses was 'bound to present Soviet activity as subversive to any global understanding and potentially dangerous to the superpower relationship'.[2] This can only be taken to mean that 'bipolarity' was an euphemism for US strategic superiority. To be sure, in the early 70s - with the US still involved in Vietnam and the USSR only starting to flex its muscles under the spell of 'parity' - the policy of détente made sense from the American point of view; it was not an 'unmitigated snare and delusion',[3] but an expedient of containment in changed circumstances. However, the idea that the USSR could become a status quo power, co-responsible for 'world order' and security was much less realistic. The Soviet interest in a form of condominium - when it played a part in exchanges with US leaders - was always explicitly directed against China, and this could not be encouraged by Nixon and Kissinger.[4] After all, their triangular diplomacy demanded that all attempts by Moscow to achieve hegemony over China be forcefully resisted.[5] The Chinese analysis of the correlation of forces in the period was more accurate, not because it reflected more precisely the 'true' nature of Soviet motives, but because it revealed the true extent of American weakness and openly exposed the nature of the challenge. In retrospect, it

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1. Philip Windsor, 'The Soviet Union in the International System of the 1980s', in <u>Prospects of Soviet Power in the 1980s</u>, Part II, Adelphi Paper No 152, IISS, London, Summer 1979, 3
2. <u>ibid</u>
3. T. Draper, <u>Present History</u>, Random House, New York, 1983, 202
4. Kissinger, <u>The White House Years</u>, 547-8; J. Newhouse, 189
5. Kissinger, <u>Years of Upheaval</u>, 53, 277

seems quite obvious that the Soviets came to assume that the US was engaged in a unilateral withdrawal from the competition for geopolitical influence, and also that they underestimated the American willingness first to demand reciprocity, and then to restore their former primacy. US leaders, on their part, clearly overestimated the superpowers' ability to control the world 'from above' and did not for a while perceive the true extent of Soviet ambitions. Finally, both the US and the USSR overestimated the impact of China as a factor in the balance of power: the Soviets by their exaggerated fears of the threat posed by the Chinese on their eastern flank, and the Americans by their exaggerated expectations about the potential of the 'China card' as an instrument for manipulating the Soviets.

'Stability' could only be sustained - if at all - by powers with parallel conceptions of 'order' or by a structure in which one power was effectively able to impose restraint on the others. Neither of these alternatives was feasible in the 1970s. But the Nixon-Kissinger strategy was not limited to the cooperative aspects of détente. The policy was essentially an attempt to preserve US power and influence at a difficult period, and to prepare the ground for a restoration of American supremacy. As Kissinger explained,

> the change in the strategic situation produced by [the US's] limited vulnerability is more fundamental for the United States than even total vulnerability would be for the Soviet Union because our strategic doctrine has relied extraordinarily, perhaps exclusively, on our superior strategic power ...Therefore, even an equivalence in destructive power, even 'assured destruction' for both sides, [was] a revolution in the strategic balance...[1]

Thus the Strategic Arms Limitation process sought to halt the race in offensive delivery systems (ICBMs and SLBMs) at a time when the US enjoyed a great advantage in warheads, to give time for the deployment of new weapon systems not covered by the SALT-I Treaty, and also for the introduction of qualitative improvements in strategic forces that would restore the US edge in the field of power-perceptions. In Kissinger's words,

> if there was an imbalance [in the 1970s] SALT did not create it; it reflected self-limiting

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1. Kissinger, For the Record, 239 (emphasis mine)

> decisions made over a decade. SALT did provide a time-span in which they could be remedied. SALT I caused us to give up not a single offensive weapons program. The freeze [on offensive weapons] was essential, indeed, if we were ever going to catch up. And we followed SALT I with a substantial modernization of our strategic forces.[1]

The 'best' that could be accomplished in the early 1970s to maintain pressure over the USSR was to 'alter the older strategic doctrine [MAD] and shift targeting **from** civilian to military objectives'.[2] This was the origin of the 'new' declaratory nuclear policy of 'limited nuclear options', which in fact represented a temporary political device rather than a substantial technical-military alteration of existing American nuclear plans.[3] In short, détente would not guarantee 'parity', for the US was not prepared to consider 'strategic stability' a 'military asset'.[4]

From the beginning, critics of détente argued that the policy led inevitably to appeasement of the USSR, and that it did not imply radical changes in the Kremlin's strategy but simply a **tactical** readjustment to continue the Cold War by other means.[5] The crucial question, however, is not whether there was a complete Soviet break with the past, but whether the East-West rapprochement led to 'modifications of Moscow's foreign policy of such magnitude as to make the change meaningful for the other party in the relationship'.[6] Apologists of détente insist that this was so, that the policy gave the US nonmaterial but very important things, like 'diplomatic leverage, a safer relationship in the central balance and better prospects of long-term stability in the world'.[7] But in fact the policy produced more tangible benefits for the US, not only because the Soviets recognised

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1. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, 257 (emphasis mine)
2. Kissinger, For the Record, 199
3. See Chapter 7 of this study
4. Kissinger, For the Record, 237
5. See E.J. Rozek, 'Henry Kissinger: The Switch-Doctor', Survey, Winter 1982, 211-18; 'Whitewashing the White House', Survey, Spring 1980, 32-40; T. Draper, 'Détente', Commentary, June 1972
6. Simes, 8
7. Bell, 47; see also her book, The Diplomacy of Détente: the Kissinger Era, Martin Robertson, London 1977, 245

a number of overlapping interests with the Americans in such relevant fields as strategic arms control, crisis management, and nuclear non-proliferation, but also - and more important - because the period of relaxation of tension with the USSR and China ran parallel with one of the most turbulent and traumatic years in the development of US domestic and foreign policies, when Nixon and Kissinger were implementing their complex and costly strategy for extrication from Indochina.[1] It was not until the Angolan civil war in the autumn of 1975 - at a time when détente had already come under concerted domestic attack in the US - that the Soviets abandoned the caution which characterized their behaviour in the early 1970s in troubled Third World areas, including Vietnam, Chile, and the Middle East.[2] To be sure, the Soviet leadership did not 'defend' American interests in these and other trouble spots, but still, the Kremlin displayed a degree of restraint which to some extent contributed to opening a 'breathing space' and to the eventual restoration of US strategic power and hegemonial will.

What the Soviets could not do, even if they had wanted to, was to freeze the status quo in the Third World, or - even less likely - to limit the damage to US interests resulting from the numerous mistakes by American policy-makers in their handling of Third World crises. A case in point was the 1973 Arab-Israeli war - which was taken by many in the US as an example of flagrant Soviet violation of the 'spirit of détente'. Leaving aside the question of how far in advance the Soviets were informed of the Arab attack, and of whether the 'principles of détente' with the US (agreed at the 1972 Moscow summit) obliged them to violate their previous 'Friendship and Cooperation

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1. As Kissinger noted: 'For the statesman...a foreign policy issue does not present itself as a theory but as a series of realities. And the realities of Nixon's first term were stark. We had to end a war in Indochina in the midst of a virulent domestic assault on all the sinews of a strong foreign policy ...Détente was not the cause of these conditions but one of the necessities for mastering them.' (Years of Upheaval, 235) (emphasis mine)
2. See Chapter 6 of this study

Treaty' with Egypt,[1] the fact is that on several occasions before the outbreak of war the Soviets - including Brezhnev himself - warned US leaders that military hostilities were imminent unless there was progress toward a peaceful settlement.[2] The Nixon-Kissinger policy of total reliance on Israel's military superiority, however, and their lack of interest in Sadat's pre-1973 overtures made war the only remaining option for the Arabs. In Europe, where the superpowers' spheres of influence were neatly

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1. For the full text of these 'Basic Principles', see US Department of State, Bulletin, April 1973, 485. The text states that both sides commit themselves to 'Do their utmost to avoid military confrontations', but it also makes it clear that nothing in the text was to contradict both parties' previous commitments. (See also, Kissinger, The White House Years, 1246-57). While questioning the Soviets' role in helping their 'friends' in the Third World, Nixon and Kissinger did not have inhibitions about doing the same for American allies, to the extent of signing (on their way back from the 1972 Moscow summit) a secret agreement with Iran backing the Shah in his destabilization of Iraq (a state allied to the USSR). In the name of stability, the USSR was asked to desist from aiding its allies, but no such limitation was to be imposed on the US. (see T. Szulc, The Illusion of Peace, The Viking Press, New York, 1978, 584)

2. During his stay with Nixon at San Clemente, California, in the summer of 1973 (Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, 286-300) Kissinger interpreted the 'Basic Principles' as implying that 'the great nuclear powers cannot be pushed into a position that jeopardizes their basic survival without noting it', and that 'the attempt of traditional diplomacy to accumulate marginal advantages is bound to lead to disastrous consequences in the nuclear age'. (US Department of State, Bulletin, June 26 1972, 885). He returned to the theory of 'marginal advantages' in the 1973 Presidential foreign policy report to Congress (written by himself and his staff). There he argued that 'a certain balance of power is inherent in any international system...But it is not the overriding concept of [US] foreign policy', because in the nuclear era 'the continual maneuvering for marginal advantages over others' was both 'unrealistic and dangerous': 'It is unrealisitc because when both sides possess such enormous power, small additional increments cannot be translated into tangible advantage or even usable political strength. And it is dangerous because attempts to seek tactical gains might lead to confrontations which could be catastrophic.' (R. Nixon, Shaping a Durable Peace, 78). This inevitably leads to the question: if the 'tactical gains' were politically insignificant, why should they then be the prelude to 'catastrophic confrontations' ? The conceptual confusion of the 'marginal advantages' theory was another sign of Kissinger's lack of understanding of the dynamics of Third World conflicts, and also of his tendency to attribute international turmoil to Soviet machinations.

drawn, all the diplomatic and strategic activities connected to détente amounted basically to 'recognizing the status quo',[1] to a 'commitment to immobilism'[2] for the perpetuation of the existing order. This same stability, however, could not be - and was not - maintained in the Third World.[3] In this area of super-power relations, there was no prospect for 'legitimacy'.

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1. Pierre Hassner, 'Détente: The Other Side', Survey, Spring 1973, 90
2. Windsor, Germany and the Management of Détente, 24-5
3. Détente, particularly with regard to its European dimension, raised for the West the problem of ideological legitimation and its relation to foreign policy. The recognition of Soviet dominance over Eastern Europe was a crucial political and security demand made by the Kremlin as the price for their favourable attitude to 'global relaxation'. Moreover, the Soviets saw détente in their block first of all as the occasion for consolidation, not for retrenchment and diffusion, for Communist centralized power and responsibility, and as an opportunity for the intensification of ideological orthodoxy - which, in practice, meant increased internal repression. Critics of the policy - who sometimes did not understand its roots in American weaknesses and wanted an early (and possibly premature) return to the Cold War in the 1970s - pointed out the dilemma. (See, for example, Norman Podhoretz, 'Kissinger Reconsidered', Commentary, June 1982, 23). For the Soviets, Marxist-Leninist ideology also acts as an important source of legitimacy, and the acceptance of the status quo in the Third World would have radically contradicted the basic mythology which sustains the Soviet elite's image at home and its projection abroad.

CHAPTER 6

POLITICAL CHANGE AND INTERNATIONAL STABILITY

THE IDEOLOGY OF 'POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT'

One of the most demanding and complex challenges for American foreign policy has to do with the United States' relations with the so-called 'Third World'. The major obstacle in the way of justifying the claims of the 'liberal' ideology of foreign policy has been, and still is, the systematic US opposition to change in the under-privileged areas of the globe, the recurrent alliances with authoritarian and repressive regimes, the hostility towards 'national liberation' movements, the support of militarism, the blatant interventionism - particularly in the Western hemisphere - and a pattern of economic links basically serving the interests of US corporations.[1]

A crucial dilemma of US policy towards the Third World has become clear since the early years of 'containment', when American policy-makers faced the problems resulting from the decay of European imperial power in Asia and Africa and the rise of militant nationalism among the subject peoples. This situation placed US decision-makers in a difficult position and, as stated for instance in a 1949 'Top Secret' National Security Council document (NSC 48/1), it was for a while considered feasible to have 'the best of both worlds' in the US response to the challenge: 'The United States', wrote the analyst,

> should continue to use its influence looking toward resolving the colonial-nationalist conflict in such a way as to satisfy the fundamental demands of the nationalist [move-ment], lay the basis for political stability and resistance to communism, and avoid weakening the colonial powers who are our Western allies.[2]

But it simply was impossible to reconcile these two mutually

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1. On the dynamics of US economic expansion, see P.M. Sweezy and H. Magdoff, The Dynamics of U.S. Capitalism, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1972. On the theme of the 'super-exploitation' of the Third World, see A. Gunder Frank, Reflections on the World Economic Crisis, Hutchinson, London, 1981, esp 23-65

2. Etzold & Gaddis, 259 (emphasis mine)

contradictory objectives, and US policies toward the Third World today continue suffering from the tension between the proclaimed liberal objectives and the realities of interventionism and opposition to social and political change.

Despite all evidence to the contrary, Packenham has argued that the basic assumptions and attitudes of American policy-makers toward the Third World reflect liberal commitments to individualism and democracy, or the American historical experience of rapid growth without revolutionary upheaval.[1] Given the actual US record in the Third World, however, and the difficulty of squaring it with liberal-democratic views, authors such as John Girling have developed a somewhat different line of argument, stating that whatever the personal preferences of American policy-makers for liberal or democratic solutions, they are 'obliged to act, first, in terms of necessity (national security) rather than ethical choice, and thus second, within the framework of the given situation in Third World countries rather than of "hypothetical" ideals'.[2] I think, however, that the question is not whether there is a tension between political ideals and the presumed 'requirements of realism', but what is the conception of 'national security' that guides US policy toward the Third World.

It is idle, I think, to ask - as Girling does - whether US intervention in the Third World is a function of the primordial drive for economic exploitation, or whether it stems rather from considerations of 'security'.[3] Even a casual look at the figures shows the sizeable dimensions of the American economic stake in the Third World,[4] the protection of which, in itself, constitutes a key component of US security policy in those areas.

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1. R. Packenham, esp Ch 3
2. J.L.S. Girling, America and the Third World, Revolution and Intervention, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1980, 109
3. ibid, 132-9
4. See Appendix, Tables 1-5, Indicators of US-Third World Economic Interdependence. On this theme, see also S.D. Krasner, Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and US Foreign Policy, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1978, esp 315-38

For my purposes, the important points to be discussed are: What are the ideological presuppositions of the US approach to the challenge of instability and political change in the Third World ? To what extent did the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy reflect a traditional pattern of US response to the problem ? And which were its innovative elements - if any ?

During the early Cold War years - before the Cuban revolution and the Vietnam war changed US ideologists' assumptions on the matter - the predominant 'official' tendency in American attitudes toward Third World political instability was based on the view that economic development would lead, almost automatically, to the rise of representative institutions, pluralism and political stability.[1] The implicit political theory behind the US's 'aid' efforts- as Kissinger himself summarized it - was, paradoxically, a crude form of Marxism, for it assumed that the economic structure inevitably has certain associated political forms. According to this theory,

> Competition with the Communists should take place above all in the realm of industrialization. Our [the US's] task should be to prove our ability to raise the standard of living more efficiently than our Communist opponents without resorting to their methods of regimentation. In the long run the satisfaction of wants [would] promote a more liberal system as well.[2]

This was, however, only part of the story, for during the same period the US government was actively promoting and helping military dictatorships throughout the Third World, and particularly in Latin America, that could not in any way be expected to lead their countries toward 'democracy'. The actual US position was directed as a matter of priority to the preservation of the status quo, with 'development' a matter of secondary importance. As stated in a 1947 'Top Secret' document by the Joint Strategic Survey Committee of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff,

> An important fact is that most of the

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1. R. Packenham, 'Political Development Doctrines in the American Foreign Aid Program', World Politics, January 1966, 213-4
2. Kissinger, The Necessity for Choice, 288

> Latin American Governments are dependent upon the military for stability. In consequence, contact with Latin American military men would in reality mean contact with very strong domestic political leaders. It is suggested that it is now advisable to attempt to bring about the economic and the domestic conditions which we desire to see in South America through these men...[1]

But the facts were that, at the time and into the 1950s, a number of important civilian political movements were struggling for real democracy in several Latin American countries, including Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua and Guatemala. The US government, however, chose to support the dictatorships of Pérez-Jimenez, Batista and Somoza, and also to overthrow in 1954 the democratically-elected government of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala, installing in that country a military tyranny that still persists.

The impact of the Cuban revolution and of the revolutionary war in Indochina produced a perceptible shift of emphasis in the American ideology of Third World 'political development'. The comfortable assumptions of the early Cold War period were shattered, and an open and explicit commitment to 'stability' and 'order' as the key marks of 'development' became the dominant feature of the most significant studies on the subject by US authors.[2] In these works - which constitute the ideological substratum of practical policies - the conservative concern with 'order' and 'stability' comes to occupy a privileged place: 'order' is not considered a prerequisite for achieving other political goods but itself becomes the highest political good. In Huntington's words 'the most important political distinction among countries concerns not their form of government

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1. Etzold and Gaddis, 77. Kennan, then at the State Department, put the position more clearly in a 1948 document relating to the Far East, 'We [the US] should cease to talk about vague and - for the Far East - unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans the better.' (ibid, 227)

2. For a review of the literature, see Mark Kesselman, 'Order or Movement ? The Literature of Political Development as Ideology', World Politics, Vol 26, No 1, October 1973, 139-154

but their degree of government'.[1] In the Third World, therefore, the purpose of 'political development' theories should be to devise ways - through a kind of political technology[2] - to strengthen the power and dominance of established authorities.

But it is not difficult to realize that the concepts of political 'order' and 'disorder' ('decay' as Huntington calls it) are extremely ambiguous. To quote Kesselman:

> Political order appears to prevail when established authorities exercise control successfully. The concept thus obscures the legitimacy of the means used by governments to maintain power. It ignores the danger posed by government that is too strong... and the disorder that derives from officially sanctioned repression...The concept of political order is not neutral: it places the burden of disorder on subordinates who challenge elites. Decay refers only to disruptions of the status quo by subordinates. Disorder that results because of rulers and ruling institutions who exert coercion falls outside the definition. Yet authorities...may create (or help perpetuate) a status quo that defies elemental requisites of the political community.[3]

This same point had been made, for instance, by Barrington Moore, who pointed out that in certain cases - and there are many examples of this in the Third World - the violence stemming from ruling institutions (resulting in political repression and social deprivation) may be no less extensive than revolutionary violence against the established 'order'.[4]

1. S. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1968, 1 (emphasis mine). See also the important essays on the subject by L. Binder et al, Crises and Sequences in Political Development, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1971
2. This point, which neatly accords with my argument about the influence of the idea of politics as 'technique' on the ideology of US foreign policy, is made by Kesselman, 142
3. ibid, 142-3. See also Charles C. Moskos & W. Bell, 'Emerging Nations and Ideologies of American Social Scientists', American Sociologist, Vol II, May 1967, 67-72
4. B. Moore, Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy, 104. For Huntington, 'The primary problem is not liberty but the creation of a legitimate public order. Men may, of course, have order without liberty, but they cannot have liberty without order. Authority has to exist before it can be limited...'(7-8) This is a standard conservative argument that can be questioned both on logical and empirical grounds. From the perspective of an idea of politics that goes beyond the purely technical interest in domination, and takes into account other values, the problem for Third World countries should be defined in terms of establishing authority and safeguarding freedom simultaneously. Even if it granted that 'order' logically precedes liberty, this does not entail that 'order' should chronologically precede liberty. (See Kesselman, 146)

The shift of emphasis in the US ideology of 'political development' from a concern with economic growth and political pluralism to a fixation upon 'stability' was a response to the increasingly unmangeable challenges of Third World nationalism and pressure for change. The key purpose of the American ideological approach to the problem now is to improve the 'crisis-management capabilities' of the ruling elites.[1] In the case of Latin America, in the period immediately after the Cuban revolution, the new emphasis on stability and 'crisis-management' involved the formulation of a 'national security doctrine' which redefined the military's mission, giving them the ideological and institutional rationale for the exercise of long-term rule.[2] In the first years of the Cold War, under strong US influence, the Latin American military organized themselves around the concept of 'hemispheric defence' against a monolithic communist external enemy. There was in fact no credible threat scenario involving Latin America in this period, except as a subsidiary arena of the East-West conflict.[3] The impact of the Cuban revolution radically changed US decision-makers' strategic assumptions about the role of the military in Latin America. US ideologists and the Latin American military now downplayed the threat of major foreign war and sharply upgraded the threat of subversion, implying greater consideration of internal security matters and therefore to the entire domestic social and political system.[4]

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1. J. La Palombara, 'Distribution: A Crisis of Resource Management' in Binder (ed), 275
2. The best analysis, from a Latin American perspective, of this doctrine, is probably the essay by J.C. Rey, 'Doctrina de Seguridad Nacional e Ideologia Autoritaria', in A. Romero (ed) Seguridad, Defensa y Democracia en Venezuela, Equinoccio, Caracas, 1980, 195-231. See also J. Saxe-Fernández, Proyecciones Hemisfericas de la Pax Americana, Amorrortu, Buenos Aires, 43-91; J. Comblin, Le Pouvoir Militaire en Amérique Latine: L'Idéologie de la Securité Nationale, Delarge, Paris, 1977, 79-156
3. Lt Col J. Child, The Inter-American System: Historical Development, Current Status and Implications for US Policy, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Pennsylvania, October 1977, 9-10
4. L. Einaudi & A. Stepan, Latin American Institutional Development Changing Military Perspectives in Peru and Brazil, The Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, April 1971, 13-22; W.A. Selchen, The National Security Doctrine and Policies of the Brazilian Government, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Pennsylvania, July 1977, 6-7

It was argued[1] that the notions of 'national security' and political and socio-economic 'development' were inextricably linked, that normal democratic procedures could not withstand the pressures of communist-inspired insurgency in conditions of under-development, and that the military should be prepared to assume power and exercise it in accordance with a long-term project of authoritarian domination. In the Third World in general, and in Latin America in particular, the tasks of 'nation building' could be undertaken by one group: the military elite. Only the security-conscious military had the ability to assume the centralized control of power that presumably would result in national 'development'.[2]

The new military, authoritarian-bureaucratic[3] regimes that emerged in Latin America in the 1960s (Brazil in 1964, Argentina in 1966, and Peru in 1968) were to a significant extent the product of the conceptual and organizational reassessments originated both among US strategists and the Latin American military by the political impact of Castro's revolutionary changes in Cuba. Even before the Cuban revolution had taken place, the US had based its Latin American policies on a quest for stability,

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1. The basic tenets of this doctrine were summarized by former US Secretary of Defence Robert S. McNamara in his book The Essence of Security, Harper & Row, New York, 1968

2. As General W. Westmoreland put it in an address to the 8th Conference of the Armies of the Americas (25 September 1968), 'Although the "nation building" process would seem to refer to a function of the civilian institutions, our own experience (in Indochina, A.R.) and that of friendly nations has been that the armed forces must frequently assume a dominant role, and use their abilities and equipment to help the people help themselves.' (NACLA Newsletter, Vol 11, No 6, 1968, 10). On the concept of 'nation building' and its role in the ideology of political development, Edward Shils, Political Development in the New States, Mouton, The Hague, 1962. Although Huntington, in his already cited and very influential book, ostensibly favours party rule, not military government, the whole thrust of his analysis and prescriptions points towards authoritarian solutions to the problem of 'stability'.

3. This is the denomination used by Latin American social scientists to distinguish these regimes - where the military as an institution assumes the role of main 'agent of national development' - from previous military dictatorships based on the individual power of a military 'caudillo'. See G.A. O'Donnell, Modernización y Autoritarismo, Paidós, Buenos Aires, 1972; J. Malloy (ed), Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1977

but their ideological justification insisted on economic growth as a path leading towards democracy. After Cuba, however, it was argued[1] that the military, as the 'technocratic' class, were the most institutionally qualified group to promote 'modernization' The theme of stability and its conservative implications came therefore to occupy an explicitly preeminent role in US dealings with the region and, more generally, with the Third World as a whole.

It was not easy to avoid the pitfalls of a pro-militaristic foreign policy, for US ideologists were caught in a dilemma between, on the one hand, their realization that socio-economic and political conditions prevailing in most of the Third World demanded a policy geared to change, and, on the other, their need to satisfy the conservative requirements of a status quo power. Kissinger's own handling of the problem built upon the premise that the question of 'political organization', not that of 'industrialization', confronts the new nations at the very beginning of their process of development, and that 'to rely on economic development to bring about enlightened political institutions is to reverse the real priorities' Communist successes in the Third World were due 'not to the excellence of its economic theory by to its political ability to mobilize national resources and organize the social effort'.[3] If the issue between the US and its Communist adversaries in the Third World was simply defined in terms of the relative capacity to promote economic growth, the outcome was 'foreordained'.[4]

1. On this point, see A. Stepan, 'The New Professionalism of Internal Warfare and Military Rule', in A. Stepan (ed), Authoritarian Brazil, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1973, 47-65; M. Klane, War Without End, Knopf, New York, 1972, 270-310
2. Kissinger, The Necessity for Choice, 310
3. ibid, (emphasis in the original)
4. ibid, 311. This point had been made more forcefully by Kennan in his February 24 1948 'Review of Current Trends' for the State Department. 'The peoples of Asia and of the Pacific area', he wrote, 'are going to go ahead, whatever we do, with the development of their political forms and mutual interrelationships in their own way...It is not only possible, but probable, that in the course of this process many peoples will fall, for varying periods, under the influence of Moscow, whose ideology has a greater lure for such peoples, and probably greater reality, than anything we could oppose to it.' (Etzold & Gaddis, 227) (emphasis mine)

Kissinger recognized that the 'new nations' could not 'live by bread alone', and that 'to offer nothing but bread [was] to leave the arena to those who are sufficiently dynamic to define their purpose'.[1] And what could the US do ? The vagueness of Kissinger's prescriptions ('to make the concepts of freedom and respect for human dignity meaningful to the new nations') matched the superficiality of his analysis, for he argued that 'Democracy has less appeal [in the Third World] not because of the West's sins but because leaders in the developing countries did not undergo the risks of the anticolonial struggle in order to make themselves dispensable'.[2] The problem of political development in the Third World cannot, however, be dissociated from its origins in the colonial period and from the pressures and challenges imposed by the contemporary international context. Western - and particularly US - political, economic and military expansion and conquest have been, and still are, major causes of conflict and instability in the underprivileged regions of the globe. Kissinger's disregard for the impact of external intervention upon Third World political evolution is not an isolated phenomenon, but a basic aspect of the US ideology of 'political development'. By failing to consider the destabilizing - and, on occasions, devastating - effects of US military and economic power on other nations, this ideology totally obscures the real issues in the American relationship with Third World nations, which mainly have to do with covert political intervention or overt military invasion, the 'stabilization' purposes of 'military assistance', and the power of US based corporations over the economic system of weaker countries.[3]

It is, I think, crucially mistaken to address the question of US-Third World relations from the perspective of the 'political development' ideology, for the problem is not that Western democratic traditions are 'sometimes unworkable' in the Third World, or that 'some form of authoritarian rule may be inevitable as a last resort',[4] but that US security policies

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1. Kissinger, The Necessity for Choice, 321
2. Kissinger, The White House Years, 69
3. See S. Bodenheimer, 'The Ideology of Developmentalism: American Political Science's Paradigm-Surrogate for Latin American Studies', Berkeley Journal of Sociology, Vol XV, 1970, 95-137; Kasselman, 149-50
4. Kissinger, The Necessity for Choice, 320-21

with regard to the Third World are founded on a view of stability that cannot accommodate changes outside the hegemonial control of American political, military and economic interests. The fear of changes carried out independently by Third World nations is characteristic of US policies in these areas, and help to explain - above all in Latin America - why the US has consistently supported authoritarian 'solutions' to the problem of order rather than coming to terms with national revolutions in the region. In my view, it makes little sense to say that 'In principle, the US would like to have democratic governments, sharing its values - and friendly to its interests - in Latin America', but that 'In practice, the most co-operative governments generally have been right-wing dictatorships'.[1] The reasons for this are not difficult to understand, for democratic governments in Latin America - such as Goulart's government in Brazil and Allende's in Chile - have usually tried harder to become more independent of the US.

The present crisis in Central America offers an extremely illuminating example of the issues under discussion. It is of course beyond the scope of this study to deal with this matter in detail, but the Central American conflict should not be totally cast aside, for it contains all the ingredients that have made US policies in the Third World such a hopeless tangle of contradictions between principles and reality. The US has traditionally supported militarism in Central America by building up and co-operating with the region's militaries, aiding them with increasingly substantial amounts of military assistance and helping them - in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua - maintain their authoritarian political positions.[2] This has been done for reasons of 'security', and to preserve the isthmus within the US's 'sphere of influence'. Historically, the weakest point in the US's long association with Central America has been the unwillingness of successive administrations to formulate a strategy capable of accommodating and promoting real and not merely cosmetic political change in the area. The

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1. G. Connell-Smith, 'The Crisis in Central America: President Reagan's Options', The World Today, October 1983, 387
2. For a thorough analysis of the association between the US and the Central American military, see D.L. Etchison, The United States and Militarism in Central America, Praeger, New York, 1975, esp 57-111

absence of a policy geared to the need for change goes a long way to explaining the rude shock inflicted on the whole edifice of American policy in the region by the Nicaraguan revolution of 1979.

Since then US policies in the area have consisted of, on the one hand, total hostility towards Nicaragua coupled with systematic attempts to overthrow the 'Sandinista' regime in Managua, and, on the other, concerted efforts to sustain in power in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, corrupt, inefficient and oppressive regimes that face increasingly powerful opposition from almost all quarters. The US strategy - as in the case of the 'Alliance for Progress' in the 1960s - is a blend of economic aid and counter-revolutionary violence that in no way clearly addresses the key problem of the distribution of political power in these societies. The recommendations of the January 1984 'Kissinger Report' on Central America, to inject massive amounts of US military and financial aid into the region, not only will not help to reduce tensions in countries dominated by civilian and military oligarchies that look to the US for support, but will actually strengthen their rule by increasing the size and capabilities of the armed forces, which are the main instruments of repression. The paradox is, then, that the 'Kissinger Report' restates all the discredited assertions of a theory of 'development' according to which the problems of economic growth can be dealt with separately from those of political change; a theory, moreover, that Kissinger himself had stigmatized for '[bemusing] itself with economic and technical remedies largely irrelevant to the underlying political and spiritual problem'.[1]

The root of the conflict in Central America is not that there are no 'democratic alternatives' but that the US - in alliance with the Latin American military and civilian oligarchies - is committed to a version of stability that cannot accept fundamental political changes in the region, leading - among other things - to a substantial dismantling of the existing

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1. Kissinger, The White House Years, 69. On the deep-seated economic and social ills of the Central American region, see V. Bulmer-Thomas, 'Crisis in Central America: economic roots and historical dimensions', The World Today, September 1983. See also, Report of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, USGPO, Washington DC, January 1984, 45-62

military institutions, radical reforms in the land-tenure systems, and new terms of treatment for foreign capital and the conditions for profit-repatriation. In principle, the US has chosen not to oppose <u>all</u> change in the Third World,[1] but to try to maintain the prevailing - favourable to American interests - pattern of relations in terms of the distribution of power and wealth, productive capacity, status and knowledge. This, as Buzan points out, can be done by using a present advantage to create conditions for superior adaptation and development in the future. The status quo thus becomes 'dynamic', inasmuch as it 'rides the wave of change rather than resisting it, but static in its attempt to hold on to the existing pattern of relations'.[2] In practice, however, during the 'Kissinger period' the US - in its relations with the Third World - did little to 'ride the wave of change' by positively relating to, rather than pushing away, the forces of change in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It was precisely during the 'Kissinger years' - to add another example to what has already been said - that the reformist-centrist alternative in Central America was destroyed by the US-supported armed forces in alliance with the oligarchic sections of society. In El Salvador, in 1972, the electoral victory of J.N. Duarte was shamefully disowned by the military, who then proceeded to torture Duarte and send him into exile - without the US doing anything to help him. Now, twelve years later, the same man is presented as the 'last card' of American policy in the isthmus. If, as Voegelin notes,[3] the moral value in political action is prudence, by which we must understand a reckoning of consequences, it is from this perspective quite obvious that Kissinger and Nixon paid little or no attention to the possible human costs of their actions - or their passivity - in the Third World.

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1. As Barnett observes, to set as a national security goal the enforcement of a totally rigid conception of 'stability' in a world 'in convulsions, a world in which radical change is as inevitable as it is necessary, is as practical as King Canute's attempt to command the tides'. (R. Barnett, 'The Illusion of Security', in Charles R. Beitz & T. Herman (eds), <u>Peace and War</u>, Freeman, San Francisco, 1973, 285)
2. B. Buzan, People, <u>States and Fear, The National Security Problem in International Relations</u>, Wheatsheaf Books, London, 1983, 179
3. E. Voegelin, <u>The New Science of Politics</u>, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1952, 1-26, 162-89

VIETNAM : 'REALISM' AS SELF-DELUSION

Politics has to do with power and also with values: with people's beliefs, convictions, and aspirations, and with what they are prepared to do to build a political order in accordance with their views on how it should be organized. The gigantic US effort in Indochina was driven by the belief in the feasibility of solving political problems essentially related to people's values through the massive application of military force. All the crucial problems in the US ideological approach to the Third World - the lack of concern for local idiosyncracies, the absence of a historical perspective, the alliances with dominant and unpopular elites, the opposition to fundamental political and socio-economic changes - came together in the Vietnam experience. The Vietnam war was not an isolated mistake, but the product of a certain view of the US's role in the world, of its security requirements, and of the malleability of Third World societies to the impact of advanced military technology and American theories of political development. It was not an isolated error, but it was a very costly one.

The basic difficulty that plagued American policy in Vietnam was the refusal to take account of the reality with which the US had to deal. To put it differently, US decision-makers never succeeded in recognizing the contradiction between the American principal aim - to preserve an independent non-Communist South Vietnam - and the reality of Vietnam: that the National Liberation Front ('Vietcong') was a politically dominant force among the southern population, particularly in the countryside, and that as long as an organized social life could be maintained in South Vietnam the NLF remained as the leading political actor among the peasants. Thus, the forced evacuation and systematic bombardment of the rural population of Vietnam were not accidental by-products of the war, but an unavoidable dimension of the US strategy. As Huntington put it in 1968, the Vietcong was 'a powerful force that cannot be dislodged from its constituency so long as the constituency continues to exist.'[1]

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1. S. Huntington, 'No More Vietnams ?', Foreign Affairs, Vol 46, 1968, 212. See also The Pentagon Papers (Gravel Edition), Vol 5, 12

The conclusion was obvious: to crush the people's war it was necessary to eliminate the people.

The fact that genocide could not be explicitly implemented as a policy - though US forces inflicted devastation on an enormous scale upon the peoples of South East Asia - meant that the political struggle remained paramount in deciding the course of the war. In this context, however, the US was bound to fail, for the South Vietnamese government was totally unable to achieve the willing identification by the peasants of their interests with those of the regime. This failure laid bare a dilemma which - according to one of the best studies on 'Counter-insurgency' - was never seriously grappled with by US policy-makers: 'Effective programs require governmental stability, but successful counterinsurgency requires granting the rural population a strong voice in its own affairs. Steps toward the latter ...threaten the former and are usually pushed aside with disastrous effects on counterinsurgency.'[1] The South Vietnamese government could not reform itself without at the same time putting its survival in peril; as a result, it had to rely on a military solution, to be necessarily implemented by the US.

Leslie Gelb, who headed the team that wrote the Pentagon Papers, has said that 'no systematic or serious examination of Vietnam's importance to the United States was ever undertaken within the American government. Endless assertions passed for analysis.'[2] This has led some authors to argue that the rationales offered to justify the US intervention in Indochina 'just do not make any sense'.[3] But actually they did make sense within the context of a notion of US security seen as the worldwide defence (in the non-communist world) of the international status quo. This required the US to 'behave like the greatest power in the world', for no other reason than - in Walt W. Rostow's words -

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1. Douglas S. Balufard, The Counterinsurgency Era. US Doctrine and Performance. 1950 to the Present, The Free Press, New York, 1977, 278
2. L. Gelb, 'Vietnam: The System Worked', 146. Gelb also maintained that 'Vietnam was not an aberration of the decision-making system, but the logical combination of the principles that leaders brought with them into it.' (Gelb and Betts, The Irony of Vietnam, 2)
3. Krasner, 321

to convince the world of this 'simple fact'.[1] In the last instance, therefore, American ideologists - Kissinger among them - came to see the issue in Vietnam simply as preventing a victory by a 'third class...peasant state' over the US.[2]

Self-delusion - grounded on the belief in the feasibility of military solutions - became a dominant trait in US policy formulation towards Indochina. The reverse of this lack of realism on the American side was the conviction that the Vietnamese did not understand the 'realities of the situation'. For Kissinger, this absence of 'realism' expressed a more general deficiency in the approach to the outside world characteristic of the leaders of the 'new nations': 'The West', he argued,

> is deeply committed to the notion that the real world, as we think of it, is external to the observer...[whereas] Other cultures that escaped the early impact of Newtonian thinking have retained and expanded the essentially pre-Newtonian view that the real world is almost completely internal to the observer...Empirical reality has a much different significance for the new countries ...for in an important sense they never went through the process of discovering it.[3]

The importance of these statements lies not only in the theoretical field, as an instance of Kissinger's astonishingly little understanding of the sociology and history of the so-called 'new nations' but also - and most significantly - in the field of policy-implementation. Views like these played a part in the US approach to Vietnam; it is therefore not surprising that Kissinger could not understand 'that a fourth-rate military power like North Vietnam doesn't have a breaking point' and that he, like his predecessors,

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1. See The Pentagon Papers (as published by The New York Times), Bantam, New York, 1971, 256
2. Kissinger, 'What Should We Do Now ?', Look, August 9 1966, 29
3. Kissinger, The Necessity for Choice, 327-8. He repeated these claims in a 1966 essay on 'Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy', where he argued that the attitudes towards 'empirical reality' of Third World societies 'which do not share our cultural mode' enable them to 'alter reality by influencing the perspective of the observer - a process which we are largely unprepared to handle or even to perceive'. (American Foreign Policy, 48-9)

still longed, in 1969, for 'decisive' military actions to destroy, once and for all, the will of the North Vietnamese.[1] The fact that the Hanoi leadership and the NLF in the South did not accept his assessment of 'empirical reality' made them appear to Kissinger as 'obnoxious', 'fanatics', 'maddening', 'almost maniacal', and led him to believe that 'lack of ambiguity was precluded by Vietnamese culture', which was, rather, a breeding ground for 'opaqueness' and 'inherent suspiciousness', giving its opponents 'an infinite capacity for intrigue'.[2]

In spite of the fact that Kissinger took time to study the political and military aspects of the war, and that he travelled to South East Asia on several occasions and made three research tours of Vietnam before assuming office, he shows in his writings only a superficial understanding of the nature of the war and of the likely nature of the peace. In his Memoirs he still treated the war as purely a case of 'communist aggression' perpetuating the discredited claim that North Vietnam had invaded the south without provocation.[3] And yet he at least grasped that, in Vietnam, 'military victories' were meaningless without a political corollary; also, he realized that the South Vietnamese government had little popular support, and could not compete politically with its adversaries. The US had been 'unable...to create a political structure that could survive military opposition to Hanoi after we withdraw';[4] but despite these drawbacks

1. See R. Morris, Uncertain Greatness. Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy, 164
2. See Kissinger, The White House Years, 259, 1320, 1441
3. ibid, 230-5. Kissinger, who should have been aware of the true record of events as revealed in the Pentagon Papers, nevertheless wrote that 'In my view, our entry into the war had been the product not of a militarist psychosis but of a naïve idealism that wanted to set right all the world's ills and believed American goodwill supplied its own efficacy.' (230)
4. Kissinger, 'The Viet Nam Negotiations', Foreign Affairs, Vol 47, No 2, January 1969, 230. In this widely praised but actually quite confusing article Kissinger emphasized one of the 'cardinal maxims of guerrilla war: the guerrilla wins if he does not lose. The conventional army loses if it does not win'. (214) According to this view, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces were winning the war by 1969; however, Kissinger went on to argue that the American military position had begun to improve substantially, and that, 'As a result, we have achieved our minimum objective: Hanoi is unable to gain a military victory'. (230) He did not explain - as Hersh rightly points out - how denying Hanoi a military victory was a measure of 'success' in view of his previously expressed conviction that Hanoi did not need a military victory in order to win. (See S.M. Hersh, Kissinger: The Price of Power, 48)

Kissinger - as Nixon - was determined that the war should somehow be ended according to American terms, for what was involved in Vietnam was 'confidence in American promises'.[1]

Nixon, too, had some definite ideas about how the war in Vietnam should be ended, and they excluded a settlement that would relinquish the Thieu regime's monopoly of power, for he strongly believed in the need to preserve South Vietnam within the US sphere of influence.[2] Both he and Kissinger came to admit that a military solution was not a viable option at acceptable costs; on the other hand, they were not prepared to compromise on the central issue of sharing power in the Saigon government with the NLF. Thus the strategy they devised aimed at a 'negotiated' settlement that would preserve the existing Saigon regime's power and sovereignty intact, by forcing Hanoi to accept US terms through the escalation of military violence, and by getting the Soviet and Chinese leaderships to put pressure on their allies to make concessions that would allow the US to withdraw 'in a manner reflecting a national decision and not a rout',[3] leaving Thieu at the head of a friendly government in South Vietnam. This strategy was formulated in the face of an inter-agency study (NSSM-1) commissioned in early 1969, which implicitly reached the conclusion that the US could neither gain a military victory nor withdraw from Vietnam leaving the South Vietnamese in a position to defend themselves.[4] In Gelb's words, the needed reassessment could only have come from 'the upper echelons of the executive branch' (which in this case meant Nixon and Kissinger but 'these men were locked into their perspectives'.[5]

The enormous obstacles blocking the way of such a strategy - which again, as in the past, put its faith in the power of military technology - did not totally escape Kissinger, though he was reluctant to tackle the political problems straight on. This would have required recognition of the fact that the US involvement had been deeply flawed all along - an admission that

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1. Kissinger, 'The Vietnam Negotiations', 219
2. The Memoirs of Richard Nixon, 349
3. Kissinger, The White House Years, 228, 298
4. The full text of NSSM-1 is printed in The Congressional Record, May 10 1972, 4975-5066
5. Gelb and Betts, 200

was too damaging to Kissinger's case for an 'honorable' withdrawal. The most he was prepared to accept was that the Thieu government did not object to this or that clause of an agreement but to the fact of a compromise: 'They preferred to continue the military contest rather than face the political struggle.'[1] Yet he believed in the need to keep the anti-communist South Vietnamese in power with the backing of US threats of military retaliation against the North. He was convinced that these assurances of continued support, coupled with the 'Vietnamization' program - that had massively resupplied the South Vietnamese army before the signing of the 'peace agreement' in early 1973 - had given the Thieu government enough instruments to withstand the communists' military and political challenges. There is enough evidence that suggests that Kissinger did not take the view that all he and Nixon had done was to buy a 'decent interval' to save face between the US pull-out and the inevitable fall of South Vietnam, but that he really believed that the South Vietnamese state could be kept going more or less indefinitely.[2] This conviction shows the extent to which Kissinger shared the failings of his predecessors in assessing the Vietnamese situation: the willingness to accept overoptimistic intelligence estimates, the belief that military aid could act as a substitute for politics, and, in sum, the propensity towards self-delusion that led him and Nixon to formulate a strategy which events proved to be deeply flawed in at least four regards:

- It failed to take account of the capacity of the North Vietnamese to adapt successfully even to an all-out war of destruction.
- It overestimated the importance of Soviet and Chinese influence on the North Vietnamese.
- Its implementation demanded an unprecedented degree of secrecy - to protect it from mounting domestic criticism - that could

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1. Kissinger, The White House Years, 1324
2. A relevant source is the book by Frank Snepp, a former senior CIA officer in South Vietnam, Decent Interval. The American Débacle in Vietnam and the Fall of Saigon, Allen Lane, London, 1980. Also Kissinger, The White House Years, 1301-1470; A. Roberts, 'Kissinger and the Structuring of US Foreign Policy' Political Studies, Vol 29, No 4, 1981, 629-30

not - in the conditions of American democratic practices - be maintained over the long run.

- Finally, it did not involve any serious consideration of the crucial problem of the war: the reluctance of the South Vietnamese population to fight on behalf of the ruling regime.

The Hanoi leadership realized that the Paris agreement of January 1973 not only gave legitimacy to the NLF's 'Provisional Revolutionary Government', but also required Thieu to compete at the political level, thus exposing the narrowness of his base of popular support.[1] Kissinger himself recognized that 'Hanoi was indeed [in 1973] instructing its cadres in the South for a long period of political competition';[2] but Nixon's statement of January 23 1973, that the US recognized Thieu's regime as 'the sole legitimate government' in South Vietnam[3] carried the seeds of a new war. With their private commitments to Saigon and their public misinterpretations of the Paris accords, Nixon and Kissinger encouraged Thieu to ignore the terms of the agreement, knowing that the US would protect him from the consequences by providing the resources to keep his army in operation. As Porter puts it: 'Merely by complying with the spirit and the letter of the agreement it had signed, the Nixon administration could have helped to foster a political settlement and save hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese from death or maiming in a prolonged war.'[4] To be sure, such a course would have implied a significant shift in policy, one that had been made doubly difficult after four further years of trying to 'win' the war.

Nixon and Kissinger acted as if American 'credibility' demanded the vindication of the disastrous policies the US had

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1. The text of the Agreement is reproduced in the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, Washington DC, January 29 1973, 45-64

2. Kissinger, The White House Years, 1470 (emphasis in the original Nowhere in his Memoirs does Kissinger discuss adequately the question whether the concessions he finally made to the North Vietnamese in January 1973 could have been agreed earlier, nor does he address the issue whether the precarious 'peace' gained in the Paris agreement was worth the extension of the war for four more years.

3. The New York Times, January 24 1973

4. G. Porter, A Peace Denied: The United States, Vietnam, and the Paris Agreement, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1975, 185

pursued from Eisenhower to Johnson, whereas what was in fact needed in order to restore the US government's credibility at home and abroad was precisely to change course in Vietnam, accept the realities of the situation, and shift the American role from military patronage of Saigon to promoter of a political settlement. True, Nixon and Kissinger inherited the Vietnam war, but not only did they accept the legacy, they also extended the war to Cambodia, turning that nation's countryside into a massive, dedicated and effective anti-American rural base. Kissinger's responsibility for this outcome was high, as he personally chose the most ambitious strategic option for carrying the US war into Cambodia and got it approved by the NSC's senior review group in September 1970.[1] But his failure in Indochina transcended the collapse of a single policy. It went to the heart of his approach to the Third World and of his views on how US interests should be conceived and upheld.

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1. W. Shawcross, Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia, Fontana, London, 1980, 177-82

THE MILITARIZATION OF FOREIGN POLICY

The so-called 'Nixon Doctrine' did not represent a change in US security policy towards the 'Third World', but merely an attempt to redistribute more efficiently the instruments of a militarized foreign policy, that is, the direct use of military force and military 'aid'. What was required, after the Vietnamese experience, was a redefinition of US security perceptions, interests, and policies, leading to a less rigid relationship with the processes of political and socio-economic change that characterize contemporary 'Third World' developments. But the 'Nixon Doctrine' was no more than an attempt to preserve American 'assets' - as traditionally interpreted - by arming and financing client regimes, without requiring a direct, costly, and, at the time, domestically unacceptable US military presence. It was, in short, a doctrine of military retrenchment without political disengagement, that nevertheless left crucial political questions unanswered.

For the way in which the war in Vietnam had ended had not given an answer to the question: what should the US do if a similar situation again arose ? In the Middle East, Latin America, Asia and Africa serious and complex challenges to 'stability' faced US foreign policy that demanded a response, and there were three alternatives open to US decision-makers: first, to pretend that the 'threats' were relatively minor and the American position more or less secure; secondly, to militarize foreign policy in order to 'contain' the challenges; and finally, to reformulate American policies on a number of pressing issues, including the Arab-Israeli dispute, decolonization in Africa, and political change in Central and South America. The Nixon Administration chose the second option, and did it, initially at least, on the basis of a certain strategic complacency that led Nixon to state (referring to the Vietnam experience): 'I seriously doubt that we will ever have another war. This is probably the very last one.'[1]

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1. The Washington Post, March 10 1971. Kissinger, on his part, emphasized the domestic dimension of the Doctrine, '[It] supplied a coherent answer to the charges of overextension; even those advocating a more far-reaching retrenchment had to take seriously the sweep and implications of Nixon's declarations.' (The White House Years, 225). For a more elaborate version of the Doctrine, see R. Nixon, A New Strategy for Peace, 40-41

This may have been just a politician's public relations exercise, but it is clear that the 'Nixon Doctrine' implicitly downgraded the possibility of successful military threats against US allies and interests materializing in the 'Third World'. Two crucial points were unclear, however: first, was there any justification for believing that the threat to traditional US notions of stability in the 'Third World' had been substantially reduced ? And, secondly, given that the 'Nixon Doctrine' committed the US to preserving its worldwide interests, avoiding as far as possible direct American involvement, did this conceal a drift towards nuclear defence or an acceptance of greater risks of local (conventional) defeat ?

The 'Nixon Doctrine' was fashioned by a number of dubious ideas about international reality, including the beliefs that, one, challenges posed to US allies in the 'Third World' could be met mainly through the mobilization of their own resources (with American support in the form of arms transfers and economic assistance) and, two, that the likelihood of such threats was low. But none of these propositions was self-evident, for there was no reason to expect that political turbulence and military insurgencies affecting US 'interests' in Asia and elsewhere would diminish. Moreover, the Doctrine's stated confidence in the US allies' ability to defend themselves was in a number of cases - as Vietnam and Cambodia showed - out of all proportion to their capabilities; yet there was no change in Nixon's and Kissinger's high estimation of the inherent importance of preserving stability and blocking revolutionary upheavals whenever these threats appeared. Thus the issues of interests, commitments, alliances, and the level of US involvement - all intrinsically political - remained unresolved, and Nixon and Kissinger never accepted that, as a result of a lower level of conventional involvement, the risks of stalemate or defeat for the US and its allies would be greater.

Nixon and Kissinger argued that 'The challenge is not merely to reduce our presence, or redistribute our burdens, or change our approach, but to do so in a way that does not call into question our very objectives.'[1] The war in Indochina, however, had shown that it was the US's foreign policy objectives that needed to be re-assessed in the light of the catastrophic course

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1. R. Nixon, Building for Peace, 16-7 (emphasis mine)

of American opposition to nationalism and revolution all over the underprivileged areas of the globe. The alternative of replacing direct US military intervention with the militarization of 'client' regimes - Israel, Iran, Guatemala, Brazil - not only implied an abandonment of politics as the guiding source of foreign policy, but also placed the US once again squarely in the familiar dilemma of having to choose between reneging on an unwise commitment to the perceived detriment of its global 'credibility', or becoming embroiled in new political and military 'quagmires'. The US, the Doctrine proclaimed, would help the self-reliant. But the self-reliant were unlikely to require help, and the view that the US would help where it made a real difference and where it was in her interest to do so did not, to quote Vincent, 'make the choice between a bad case for assistance and a worse one any easier (the good one not requiring assistance).'[1] Rather than withdrawing because certain commitments were considered unsound, Nixon and Kissinger determined that the US should extricate itself only after unsound commitments had been made sound[2] - usually by 'stabilizing' client regimes through military aid. Thus the analysis of political alternatives to existing commitments and the redefinition of security interests were sacrificed in favour of military incrementalism.

It has been argued by Sorley[3] that the arms transfer policies of the Nixon administration were a 'brilliant rearguard action', conducted in the face of a wave of disengagement sentiment, that sought to 'retain as much influence for the United States in world affairs as was possible and to use that influence to help shape new relationships that would be more conducive to peace and security'.[4] This, however, can be questioned on several grounds. In the first place, the author makes it appear as if the only alternative left to US decision-makers to preserve American influence in the Third World after the Vietnam debacle was a policy of indirect military involvement. But in fact there were other

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1. R.J. Vincent, 'Kissinger's System of Foreign Policy', The Year Book of World Affairs, Stevens & Sons, London, 1977, 19
2. J.L.S. Girling, 'Kissingerism: The Enduring Problems', International Affairs, Vol 51, No 3, July 1975, 336-7
3. Lewis Sorley, Arms Transfers under Nixon: A Policy Analysis, The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 1983, 30
4. ibid, 183

options of a political nature - in the Middle East and Latin America, for instance - that did not require the obsessive concern with the militarization of the Third World that characterized the administration's military assistance programmes.[1] Secondly, the argument that these policies contributed to 'peace' and 'security' has little empirical foundation. What the Nixon-Kissinger doctrine of 'self-reliance' did was to strengthen regional 'patrons' like Iran, Israel, and Brazil, encouraging them to 'defend themselves' against either non-nuclear external threats or internal unrest: the latter, on a number of occasions, being the usual target. Thus the massive US arms supplies coupled with more effective military training not only expanded the coercive ('defence') capacity of Third World regimes, but also, as Girling puts it, 'made them more likely to use force, rather than persuasion, in dealing with the threat to "national security" posed by endemic ethnic, religious, regional or class tension and conflict'.[2] In their pursuit of 'stability' Nixon and Kissinger were not overly concerned with the fact that internal discontent might well be justified and should be conciliated rather than suppressed. Their efforts to expand the military capabilities of 'friendly' Third World regimes, rather than contribute to 'security', intensified the trend towards more authoritarian behaviour by militarized regimes domestically and also their propensity to use force against external adversaries.

The policy of relying on militarized clients to preserve 'regional security' led to a series of costly blunders and failures In the Middle East, it set the stage for the October 1973 war and for the Shah's militaristic and dictatorial excesses, that sowed the seeds of revolution. In Latin America, it strengthened the forces of authoritarianism and repression throughout the hemisphere, and determined the administration's hostility to any sign of change. In Africa, the mirage of 'stability' and the refusal to consider alternative policies committed the US to fostering both the white-minority regimes and the Portuguese presence in the region, with the administration moving to 'stifle any criticism of Portugal's colonial role in Africa by more liberal

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1. See Appendix (Figures 1-2) of this study
2. Girling, 'Kissingerism', 342

members of NATO, such as Norway and Canada, a strategy which [would] in fact enable a more silent and cohesive coordination of aid to Portugal'.[1] In all these cases, short-term military 'security' was bought at the price of a long-term increase in the underlying political tensions, and an intensification of the risks of even more destructive wars.

Policies towards the Arab-Israeli conflict were particularly misguided, with tragic results for all peoples in the region. They were based on a blind reliance on Israel's military supremacy, a systematic underestimation of the Arab states' capabilities, and a total lack of concern for the demands of the Palestinian national movement. Kissinger's aim was to preserve the post-1967 status quo by the threat of Israeli military retaliation, for in his view 'the longer the stalemate continued the more obvious would it become that the Soviet Union had failed to deliver what the Arabs wanted...Sooner or later, if we kept our nerve, this would force a reassessment of even radical Arab policy.'[2] He argued that 'until some Arab state showed a willingness to separate from the Soviets', the US had 'no reason to modify [its] policy',[3] but it was totally unnecessary to wait until the aftermath of the October 1973 war to accommodate Egypt within the US system of alliances in the area, for it should have been clear at the time that, after Nasser's death, Sadat had moved decisively to implement two policies: peace with Israel and the conversion of Egypt to an American client state.[4] Kissinger,

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1. US House of Representatives, US Business Involvement in Southern Africa. Part I, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, 92nd Congress, USGPO, Washington DC, 1972, 286. The Nixon-Kissinger policies towards Africa were based on the premise that 'The whites are here to stay and the only way that constructive change can come about is through them.' (The Kissinger Study on Southern Africa, 66). This assessment included not only the Portuguese, but also the white regimes in Rhodesia and South Africa, and it goes a long way toward explaining the haphazard and generally hostile nature of the US's responses to both the collapse of the Portuguese empire, and to the black peoples' attempts to transform their conditions of life under white minority rule.
2. Kissinger, The White House Years, 176, 1279. Also, Years of Upheaval, 196
3. Kissinger, The White House Years, 1291
4. On this point, see the excellent analysis by Noam Chomsky in his book The Fateful Triangle: The US, Israel and the Palestinians, Pluto Press, London, 1983, 64-70. Also, Towards a New Cold War, 184-5

however, completely missed Sadat's 'signals', which included, at the very least, the following: (a) the offering, in February 1971, of a full peace treaty to Israel on the pre-June 1967 borders, with recognized borders and security guarantees; (b) a massive purge, in May 1972, of pro-Soviet elements in the Egyptian government; (c) an Egyptian military intervention to crush a pro-Soviet communist coup in Sudan in July 1972; (d) the expulsion, the same month, of 15,000 Soviet military advisers and experts from Egypt; (e) finally, the opening of a 'secret channel' to the White House in April 1972. But Kissinger's reactions to all this were, as he puts it, 'largely tactical'; he wanted to 'continue to bring home to Sadat the futility of his course...'[1]

The truth is, however, that Nixon and Kissinger pushed Sadat to the wall by their total misreading of the diplomatic situation, as well as their insistence on interpreting the Arab-Israeli conflict through the prism of the 'Soviet challenge' theory of international conflict. Between 1969 and 1973 Kissinger played a crucial role in undermining all efforts to break the diplomatic impasse through negotiations with the Arabs, convinced as he was that Israel's power was unchallengeable.[2] All warnings from US Ambassadors in the area, from US oil companies, from Sadat himself, and even leading Jewish figures, that if negotiations were not seriously carried forward there would be a disastrous war were disregarded.[3] In the end, Egypt and Syria went to war, a war during which the US called a strategic nuclear alert, and that created - according to Blechman and Hart - 'a serious threat of military conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union'.[4] Another study alleges that Israel also threatened to use nuclear weapons in the early stages of the war, in order to compel the US to re-supply the Israeli Defence Forces with massive transfers of conventional weapons.[5] For Kissinger, however, this

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1. Kissinger, The White House Years, 1294
2. ibid, 373-7, 560-93, 1280-1300
3. See Chomsky, The Fateful Triangle, 66. Also US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Multinational Oil Corporations and US Foreign Policy, USGPO, Washington DC, January 2 1975, Part III, Section VII
4. B.M. Blechman and D.M. Hart, 'The Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons', International Security, Vol 7, No 1, 1982, 132-56
5. See A. Perlmutter, M. Handel, U. Bar-Joseph, Two Minutes over Baghdad, Vallentine, Mitchell & Co., London, 1982, 19

dangerous conflict, which led to the oil embargo and to unprecedented Arab successes on the battlefield, demonstrated the essential correctness of his strategy, which now culminated 'in an unexpected showdown'.[1] But the fact that this war was needed to make Nixon and Kissinger understand Sadat's willingness, indeed eagerness, to transform Egypt into an American client-state only showed their ignorance of the political context of the Middle East, as well as their arrogant reliance on force as a substitute for politics in the Third World.

Iran, another 'showpiece' of the Nixon Doctrine, had received $1.8 billion in US military grant-aid between 1950 and 1970. In the following <u>six</u> years, under Kissinger's stewardship, American arms sales totalled $12.1 billion, of which 80% was for equipment.[2] This massive programme helped to discredit the Shah at home, to stir Iranian antagonisms toward the US, and completely to distort the economic development of the country: 'There was the overconcentration of power and wealth, wild inflation, luxury-centered consumption, debilitating corruption, the military's priority over civilian needs...and the rising food-import bill.'[3] But for Kissinger, the Shah was a 'pillar of stability' and 'a dedicated reformer'; he was indeed 'authoritarian', but 'This was in keeping with the traditions, perhaps even the necessities of his society'.[4] His overthrow'had little to do with his purchases of military equipment'[5], for it cannot be said that the Shah's arms purchases 'diverted resources from economic development'.[6] The Shah's problem was that he 'modernized too rapidly', and 'did not adapt his political institutions sufficiently to the economic and social changes he had brought about'.[7] The US 'could have

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1. Kissinger, <u>Years of Upheaval</u>, 468
2. B. Rubin, <u>Paved with Good Intentions: The American Experience in Iran</u>, Oxford University Press, New York, 1980, 128
3. <u>ibid</u>, 145
4. Kissinger, <u>The White House Years</u>, 1258-9
5. Kissinger, <u>Years of Upheaval</u>, 670
6. Kissinger, <u>The White House Years</u>, 1260
7. <u>ibid</u>, 1259. In his analysis of the Shah's fall, Kissinger again castigates the assumptions of the theory that economic growth stimulates political stability, arguing that 'in underdeveloped countries economic growth tends to have the opposite effect; it compounds political unrest'. (1260). As noted earlier, this totally contradicts Kissinger's present approach to the challenge to US traditional policies in Central America.

urged the Shah to do that', but, said Kissinger, 'I am not sure that we would have known what to say'.[1] This is hardly surprising, for the facts are that the US had brought him back to power in 1953 - overthrowing a regime that did not confirm Kissinger's theses on the dictatorial 'needs' of Iranian society - trained the secret police (SAVAK), and supplied the military and economic aid that perpetuated his rule. The factual record - to which Kissinger makes few and superficial references - shows conclusively that the Shah's 'reformist' policies were disastrous for a large part of the Iranian people both in the rural and urban areas, that enormous resources were squandered in support of the Shah's martial extravaganza, and that he created an economy that perpetuated, sometimes intensifying, impoverishment among the underprivileged sectors of Iranian society - the vast majority who rebelled against his rule in 1978-79.

If the Nixon-Kissinger policies toward Iran provided an example of the dangers of blindly supporting an autocrat for reasons of 'regional security' - ignoring the evidence of wide-spread corruption, social dislocation, and repression, their policies toward Latin America illustrated the US preference for authoritarian solutions to the problem of instability in the Third World. In August 1969, a Presidential Mission, headed by Nelson Rockefeller presented to Nixon its Report on the Americas, which codified the basic principles of the administration's approach to the area. Its fundamental premise was that 'a new type of military man is coming to the fore and often becoming a major force for constructive social change in the American republics'. Motivated by increasing impatience with corruption, inefficiency, and a stagnant political order, 'the new military man is prepared to adapt his authoritarian tradition to the goals of social and economic progress'. In view of this 'reality', the US goal should be to 'work with them' in their efforts 'to bring education and better standards of living to their people while avoiding anarchy and violent revolution'.[2] But this was not at all what was happening, or could be expected to happen. In the first place, the 'new' Latin American military regimes of the 1960s and 70s

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1. See Kissinger, For the Record, 177
2. The Rockefeller Report on the Americas, Quadrangle Books, Chicago, 1969, 32-3, 61

originated as a dictatorial response to processes of democratization and popular mobilization that had endangered the privileges of traditionally dominant social and economic sectors. Their 'novelty' did not reside in their methods or policies - which continued to be repressive and oriented to satisfy the interests of a minority - but in the fact that, this time, the military <u>institution</u> itself assumed control of the state, and that they developed a legitimating ideology founded on the notion of 'national security' as equivalent to 'development'.[1] In the second place, the <u>nature</u> of these regimes made it imperative for the military to adopt anti-popular policies in the social and economic realms: anti-egalitarian, elitist, and openly favourable to capital - particularly foreign capital - rather than labour.[2]

The Rockefeller Report's conclusions and the policies that flowed from it, derived from the highly dubious proposition that

> Democracy is a very subtle and difficult problem for most of the other countries in the hemisphere...Few of these countries have achieved the sufficiently advanced economic and social systems required to support a consistently democratic system. For many of these societies, therefore, the question is less one of democracy or a lack of it than it is simply of orderly ways of getting along.[3]

Quite apart from the fact that such an assessment totally overlooks the role of the US in repeatedly stifling democracy in the hemisphere - in Guatemala in 1954, Brazil in 1964, Dominican Republic in 1965, Chile in 1973 - the idea that many Latin American nations are not yet 'ready' to live in freedom is contradicted by the realities of our history, the long spells of democratic rule in several countries - economically and socially diverse - and the arduous struggle for liberty and democratization - against both internal and external opposition - that is a common and constant factor in the contemporary history of all Central and South American countries.

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1. See G. Arriagada and M.A. Garretón, 'America Latina a la Hora de las Doctrinas de la Seguridad Nacional', in M.A. Pérez (ed), <u>Las Fuerzas Armadas en la Sociedad Civil</u>, CISEC, Santiago, 1978, 143-229

2. M.E. Carnanza, <u>Fuerzas Armadas y Estado de Excepción en América Latina</u>, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1978, 68-89

3. <u>The Rockefeller Report on the Americas</u>, 58

Kissinger has argued that Allende's electoral victory represented 'a break with Chile's long democratic history', for he 'would become President not through an authentic expression of majority will but through a fluke of the Chilean political system'.[1] It is true that in 1970 Allende obtained 36% of the vote, but Kissinger himself recognizes that the programme of the Christian Democratic Party - which got almost as many votes as Allende's left-wing coalition - 'differed from Allende's largely on procedural points...';[2] in other words, it was also radical in its political nature, and the support that both Allende and Tomic (the Christian Democratic candidate) received showed that the Chilean people voted overwhelmingly in favour of profound reforms of their political and socio-economic systems. For Kissinger however, Allende's electoral triumph was 'by definition...the last democratic election' in Chile,[3] a pronouncement completely at odds not only with the fact that democratic elections continued under Allende, but also with the results of these elections, which confirmed on several occasions the massive popular support for a policy of reform, with the left-wing coalition's share of the vote actually increasing.[4]

According to Kissinger, the US's attempts, in 1970, forcefully to prevent Allende's accession to power amounted to no more than a 'haphazard and amateurish exploration of a military coup, designed to bring about not military rule but a new electoral contest...'[5] He also holds that 'There was no American involvement in coup plotting afterwards.'[6] Both assertions are totally disproved by the official documentation published in the US, that

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1. Kissinger, The White House Years, 654
2. ibid, 665
3. ibid, 655
4. In the Municipal elections of April 1971, Allende obtained 50.2%, the Christian Democrats 27%, and the extreme-right 20%. In the Congressional elections of March 1973, Allende's 'Popular Unity' alliance gained six seats in the Chamber of Deputies and two seats in the Senate, with 43% of the total vote: a remarkable and unprecedented achievement in the Chilean context, and at a time of deep political and economic crisis to a significant extent induced by US pressures and the openly anti-democratic practices of the right-wing conspirators.
5. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, 377
6. ibid, 377, 382

shows that US security agencies, between September 1970 and September 1973, not only instigated a military coup in Chile, but also participated in its design and organization, and helped to orientate the actions of the new military government.[1] The 'haphazard and amateurish' conspiracy of 1970, on the other hand, led to the assassination of the Chilean Army's Commander in Chief, General René Schneider. A 'new election' could hardly have been the conspirators' purpose.[2]

The hostility towards Allende and the intervention in Chilean politics summarized all the prejudices and conservative ideological assumptions of the Nixon administration's foreign policy in the Third World: the fear of change, the struggle against nationalism and social reform, the use of the military as an instrument to repress popular demands and to protect foreign interests, with devastating consequences for the countries involved. Considering what has happened in Chile since 1973, Kissinger's view that 'the change of government in Chile was on balance favourable - even from the point of view of human

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1. See Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders, USGPO, Washington DC, 1975, 225-54; US Senate, 93rd Congress, hearings before the Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations, (2 vols), USGPO, 1973; US Senate, 94th Congress, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, Covert Action in Chile, 1963-1973, USGPO, 1975. In his Memoirs, Kissinger argues that 'A suspicious Senate investigating Committee was forced to admit that it could find "no evidence" of American complicity' in Allende's downfall (Years of Upheaval, 374), but he is referring only to the last collections of documents mentioned earlier, and his interpretation of the Committee's views is distorted, to say the least.

2. For a detailed analysis of the Nixon Administration's role in the overthrow of Allende, see Joan Garcés, Allende y la Experiencia Chilena, Ariel, Barcelona, 1976, 65-112; A. Uribe, Le Livre Noir de l'Intervention Américaine au Chili, Le Seuil, Paris, 1974. To be sure, US actions were not the only factor that determined Allende's tragic fate; the mistakes of the 'Popular Unity' coalition, and the total opposition of all sectors privileged under the 'established order' in Chile, also played a crucial part in his government's downfall. For my purposes, however, the important point to be emphasized is that the US's anti-Allende intervention began even before he took office, because he represented the possibility of political and social changes that were seen with displeasure in Washington. Allende, it must be added, made efforts to ensure that his government's relations with the US were cordial and based on mutual respect, but to no avail. (See A. Uribe, 'Chili: étrange défense de la liberté', Le Monde Diplomatique, 8 décembre 1979, 8-9)

rights',[1] demonstrates an almost indecent disregard for the facts.

The militarization of American foreign policy during the Nixon-Kissinger years only accentuated the influence of the basic ideological premises that have determined the US approach to Latin America, Asia, and Africa after World War II. However, the 'Nixon Doctrine', in its strategic implications, revitalized the role of nuclear weapons as instruments of policy, and this was a relatively new development after the Kennedy-Johnson Third World 'counterinsurgency' policies. The objective of reducing the US conventional involvement, while preserving intact American worldwide commitments, meant an increase in the US reliance on the use of nuclear weapons to protect its interests in a crisis. To be sure, the 'Nixon Doctrine' did not exhaust alternative military responses farther down the scale from nuclear war; my point is, rather, that in reducing the possibility of use of US troops in a future case of 'resistance to aggression', it implicitly had to rely for its credibility on a suggestion of willingness to invoke nuclear war.[2] To put it differently, the total thrust of the Nixon-Kissinger defence policy was to increase reliance on nuclear weapons as a substitute for conventional military means, a step totally in line with the ideological tendency to search for technical solutions to political problems.

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1. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, 411. On the political and socio-economic effects of military rule in Chile after 1973, see P. O'Brien and J. Roddick, Chile: The Pinochet Decade, Latin American Bureau, London, 1973

2. R.F. Weigley, The American Way of War, Macmillan, London, 1973, 468-9

CHAPTER 7

THE POLITICS OF NUCLEAR STRATEGY

KISSINGER AND THE DILEMMAS OF NUCLEAR STRATEGY

I have argued so far that the Kissinger-Nixon foreign policy design was decisively influenced by a conservative-realist ideology that derives from two key factors: a conception of politics as 'technique' and an inadequate understanding of the nature of the social element in political life and of its impact upon historic change. Kissinger's conservatism was informed by a conviction of the need to conduct an active policy, which allowed for flexibility and tactical adjustments, in order to combat the twin challenges to US hegemony represented by the growth of Soviet power and the rise of Third World nationalism. His - and Nixon's - fundamental objective was to preserve the privileged American position in the international system on the basis of the co-option of adversaries - through the policy of détente - and of the implementation of a 'new' regional security policy - the Nixon Doctrine - that relied on the activities of client states to maintain 'stability'.

I have tried to show the practical relevance of these ideological assumptions on the formulation and operationalization of the Kissinger-Nixon foreign policy design towards the US main adversaries and in the Third World. It is now my intention to consider the effects of the conservative-realist ideology on the evolution of US nuclear strategy - which is here understood as 'an activity consciously studied, analyzed and practised'[1] according to certain political conceptions of the utility of military force, and, specifically, nuclear weapons, to serve the ends of state policy. My definition therefore stresses the fact - to be discussed later - that the way nuclear strategy has evolved is closely related to a view of politics, and that only by understanding the nature of this view of politics is it possible to discover the roots of the technological distortion in this area

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1. M. Howard, 'The Relevance of Traditional Strategy', in The Causes of War and Other Essays, Unwin Paperbacks, London, 1984, 86

of US military policy and also to clarify what kind of 'order' the 'nuclear order' is.

My main point will be that there is a crucial paradox in the way the epistemological presuppositions of conservative-realism affects nuclear strategy: on one side - and despite the constructivistic[1] foundations of the notion of politics as 'technique' - the theory of deterrence accepts the basic political irrationality of nuclear weapons as an instrument of policy; but, on the other side, this conception of politics pushes nuclear strategy towards a continuous and relentless search for 'technical' solutions to the dilemmas of deterrence. To put it differently, the 'technological infatuation' characteristic of US nuclear strategy is the result of an ideological belief in the possibility of solving political problems through technical means. Thus, even though deterrence rests on the threat of political annihilation, the notion of politics as 'technique' that characterizes conservative-realism constantly reinforces the tendencies that make the materialization of that threat more likely. In what follows, I will trace the development of nuclear strategy in the US - and Kissinger's role in it - up until the period of the Nixon administration, as a preliminary step to discussing the nature of the nuclear order, the perversion of (political) relevance in nuclear strategy, and the impact these processes have had, and continue to have, upon US foreign policy.

The political use of nuclear strategy as an instrument of US foreign policy must be seen as the expression of a certain conception of politics, which determines a permanent unwillingness to accept the existence of a nuclear 'stalemate'. Discussions on 'deterrence', therefore, make little sense unless they are placed within the context of: (a) the actual evolution of war plans, and (b) the efforts to give political utility to the nuclear arsenals as an instrument of power in an age of revolution.

Even though it is basically correct to say that for the

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1. I use the term 'constructivism' in the sense given to it by F.A. Hayek, as a conception according to which man not only designs and creates the different institutional 'orders' in which his social existence develops, but he can also alter them at will. See 'The Errors of Constructivism', in New Studies in Philosophy, Politics, Economics and the History of Ideas, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1978, 3-22

greater part of the nuclear age, Western strategic thought at the academic level 'has focused on deterrence and other means of avoiding strategic nuclear war', and that, at least until ten years ago, little thought had been given 'to the conduct of nuclear war in the event that deterrence failed',[1] the fact is that, at the operational level, the US has always (since 1945) had plans for the practical implementation, if need be, of nuclear war.[2] True, 'target lists' have usually received more attention than war aims, and existing forces have on occasion - or perhaps always - been inadequate to the tasks set them, but the question of what to do if deterrence fails 'has received a great deal of attention (by the military-technical apparatus) for a very long time'.[3] The available evidence tends to suggest that at this (operational) level - which is not that of 'nuclear theology' - premiums have always been placed on the refinement of weapons systems, and nuclear war has never been considered 'unthinkable'.[4]

The US has never adhered to a doctrine of 'mutually assured destruction' - in the sense of accepting nuclear stability based on 'parity' - and the search has continued throughout the nuclear era for ways to preserve or restore some kind of meaningful 'superiority' over the USSR in the nuclear field and, of course, to instrumentalize politically the operational threat of nuclear weapons. The evolution of US nuclear strategy has not only been related to changes in technology, but also to alterations in the political environment and to perceptions of the character of

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1. D. Ball, Can Nuclear War be Controlled ?, Adelphi Paper No 169, IISS, London, Autumn 1981, 1
2. These are discussed by A.L. Friedberg, 'A History of the US "Strategic Doctrine": 1945 to 1980', The Journal of Strategic Studies, Vol 3, No 3, 1980, 37-71
3. ibid, 45
4. As stated in a 1948 'Top Secret' NSC Memorandum on 'United States Policy on Atomic Weapons': 'The United States has nothing presently to gain, commensurable with the risk of raising the question, in either a well defined or an equivocal decision that atomic weapons would be used in the event of war. An advance decision that atomic weapons will be used, if necessary, would presumably be of some use to the military planners. Such a decision does not appear essential, however, since the military can and will, in its absence, plan to exploit every capability in the form of men, materials resources and science this country has to offer. (Etzold & Gaddis, 340-41, emphasis mine). In other words, the operational establishment would continue to prepare for nuclear war even without an explicit public political decision on the matter.

strategic strength in the international system and the respective global positions of the superpowers.[1] During the period of American atomic monopoly it was officially decided that 'in the event of hostilities, the National Military Establishment must be ready to utilize promptly and effectively all appropriate means available, including atomic weapons, in the interest of national security and must therefore plan accordingly'.[2] The possession of a 'super' bomb was regarded (in 1950) as possibly 'a decisive factor if properly used',[3] and was quickly developed. From this point until the end of the decade capabilities were deployed to carry out strikes against the full panoply of targets within the Soviet bloc.[4] At this stage the 'massive retaliation' strategy 'explained how a new war might be fought during the remaining period of grace of patent nuclear superiority', and the debate that took place in these years on the possibility of 'limited' nuclear wars was in fact based on the same premise as 'massive retaliation': 'that a nuclear strategy could work to the advantage of the West.'[5]

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1. Thus, it is simplistic to argue that 'When changes in speed or accuracy of weaponry increased the vulnerability of forces, the balance of opinion shifted in favour of counterforce targeting; when both sides had forces sufficiently invulnerable that either would disarm itself more than its victim in a first strike (the situation around the time of SALT I), persuasiveness of MAD was at its peak.' (R.K. Betts, 'Elusive Equivalence: The Political and Military Meaning of the Nuclear Balance', in S. Huntington (ed), The Strategic Imperative, Bellinger Publishing Co., Cambridge, Mass, 1982, 103). It was precisely at the time of SALT I that the US was developing a new array of weapons systems and a 'new' nuclear doctrine directed towards the restoration of American strategic superiority and the political utility of nuclear strategy. The technological factor was only one, among others, influencing these doctrinal changes.
2. Etzold & Gaddis, 343
3. ibid, 370 (from a January 13 1950 'Top Secret' document). See also 343, 363
4. Friedberg, 47
5. Freedman, The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy, 90, 95. According to Morgenthau, 'those conceptions of limiting nuclear war...are peculiarly American and are the result of a humanitarian impulse within the framework of an utterly inhuman enterprise'. ('The Fallacy of Thinking Conventionally About Nuclear Weapons', in D. Carlton and C. Shaerf (eds), Arms Control and Technological Innovation, Croom Helm, London, 1977, 245). This may be so, but it is at least arguable that less altruistic motivations also play a role in the debate. This can well be taken as another example of the propensity for self-delusion of the 'realists'.

The move towards 'flexible response' in the early 1960s occurred at a moment when the US enjoyed vast strategic superiority (in number and quality of weapons) over the USSR. Basically, the strategy of 'flexible response' was an attempt to increase the credibility of American nuclear threats by relating them to a wider number of possible contingencies, rather than simply emphasizing indiscriminate retaliation and all-out war. At the strategic nuclear level - as initially formulated by McNamara - it was a strategy of second-strike counterforce that required a significant upgrading of command and control facilities and the establishing in advance of detailed operational plans.[1] In this sense it incorporated the fundamental legacy of the 'limited nuclear war' debate of the 1950s: the belief in the feasibility of 'controlling' the nuclear order by improving its technological basis. True, McNamara and his aides soon realized that a strategy of second strike counterforce that did not provide clear indicators of 'sufficiency' (how much is enough ?) opened the doors to massive budgetary demands from the armed services. These demands, however, could not be met at a period when the US government was both increasing its involvement in Vietnam and trying to implement the costly domestic programmes of Johnson's 'great society'. As budgetary pressures mounted, defence priorities shifted away from strategic offensive and defensive forces to those conventional forces required to prosecute the war in South East Asia.[2] At McNamara's urging, proposals by the military for major new strategic weapons systems (i.e. ABM, a new advanced bomber, Poseidon, and Minuteman III) were rejected or simply deferred.[3] This essentially was the background to McNamara's

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1. See W.W. Kaufmann, The McNamara Strategy, Harper & Row, New York, 1964, 53, 74

2. Defence budgets totalling almost $ 50 billion prior to escalation in Vietnam rose sharply to approximately $66 billion, $73 billion, $75 billion, and $82 billion from Fiscal Year 1966 to FY 1969. At the same time military expenditures on major strategic nuclear forces declined significantly during the period from 1965 to 1968 relative to what they had been in the early 1960s and would be after Nixon took office. (See US Department of Defense: Statement by the Secretary of Defense C.M. Clifford on the 1970 Defense Budget and Defense Program for FY 1970-74, USGPO, Washington DC, January 15 1969. Also, J.J. Holst Parity, Superiority, or Sufficiency ?, Adelphi Paper No 65, IISS London, February 1970, 31)

3. H.B. Moulton, From Superiority to Parity: The US and the Strategic Arms Race, 1961-1971, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1973, 284-5

declaratory shift from counterforce formulas to an emphasis on the 'assured destruction' mission of nuclear forces[1] - that is, to a policy of 'maintaining a highly reliable ability to inflict an unacceptable degree of damage upon any single aggressor, or combination of aggressors, even after absorbing a surprise first strike'.[2] This change in declaratory US nuclear policy from 'city-avoidance' to 'assured destruction' was not, however, accompanied by a corresponding alteration of US nuclear war plans, for the majority of designated targets were still Soviet military installations, and options for city-avoiding attacks (counterforce) were maintained in the Single Integrated Operational Plan.[3] In other words, US operational plans continued to be guided by a strategy of second strike counterforce, stressing such notions as 'control', 'options', 'flexibility', and 'sequential attacks', and also by the belief that the US would preserve a margin of quantitative and qualitative superiority over the USSR in the nuclear field well into the future.[4]

It was this last assumption that was shattered by the awesome Soviet effort to reach a position of raw strategic 'parity' in number of nuclear delivery vehicles with the US in the middle and late 1960s.[5] It is probably true that McNamara

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1. In Henry Rowen's words: 'The primary purpose of the Assured Destruction capabilities doctrine was to provide a metric for deciding how much force was enough: it provided a basis for denying...claims for more money for strategic forces...However, it was never proposed by McNamara and his staff that nuclear weapons actually be used in this way.' (Quoted in Friedberg, 53); see also Freedman, The Evolution..., 245-6

2. R.S. McNamara, Annual Defense Department Report, Fiscal Year 1965, USGPO, Washington DC, 1967, 12

3. D. Ball, 'Déjà Vu: The Return to Counterforce in the Nixon Administration', in R. O'Neill (ed) The Strategic Nuclear Balance, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1975, 171

4. Friedberg, 52-3

5. For an excellent analysis of the technological characteristics and political impact of the Soviet strategic build-up, see W.R. Schilling, 'US Nuclear Concepts in the 1970s: The Search for Sufficiently equivalent Countervailing Parity', International Security, Vol VI, No 2, 1981, 48-79. The key figures are these: starting in 1964, when the USSR had 389 strategic delivery vehicles and the US had 1,800, the USSR had surpassed the US in the number of ICBMs by 1970, in the number of SLBMs by 1975, and in the total number of inter-continental bombers, ICBMs and SLBMs by 1973.

and his principal aides had become convinced in those years that some form of 'parity' in which both sides maintained secure, second-strike, 'assured destruction' forces, was not only an inevitable but also a desirable state of affairs to strive for. Three things, however, must be remembered: first, McNamara's efforts to introduce some measure of moderation into the arms race - based on the deterrent value of mutual vulnerability to a 'city-busting' first strike - were made from the comfortable position of knowing that the US enjoyed a significant lead over the USSR in both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of that race. Secondly, it is highly likely that the Soviets, particularly after the 1962 Cuban crisis, faced with the reality of an increasingly assertive American military involvement throughout the world, found it difficult to reconcile a declaratory policy of moderation with the actions of the US government. Finally, as pointed out earlier, not only did US nuclear war plans change little in the 1960s, but there also remained strong pressures for a drive for decisive superiority and/or the determined acquisition of damage-limiting capabilities (offensive and defensive).[1]

It is basically correct to say that there are two broad schools of thought in the public debate on US nuclear strategy: the 'MAD' school views nuclear weapons as so irrationally destructive that they render traditional strategic notions obsolete, emphasizing, rather, the deterrent fear derived from mutual vulnerability.[2] The second school - which Betts calls the 'damage limitation' school[3] - stresses two things: first, that the nuclear arsenals are a factor of state policy the political utility of which goes beyond their own mutual cancellation through deterrence of all-out war; secondly, that it is essential to be ready to achieve sensible objectives in nuclear war should deterrence

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1. Freedman, The Evolution..., 255

2. A good example of this view is provided by McGeorge Bundy's piece, 'A Matter of Survival', The New York Review of Books, March 17 1983

3. Betts, 102-3

fail.[1] In practice, however, US nuclear deployment policies and war plans have always responded to war-fighting requirements, covering a wide range of types of means and targets; and even when 'assured destruction' objectives have been most strongly stressed in the rhetoric, the actual operational plans - with their basic thrust towards achieving technological dominance in a nuclear confrontation - remained mostly unchanged until the late 1960s.[2]

This tendency received a determined impulse with the arrival of the Nixon administration in 1969. Nixon ascended to the Presidency with a strong commitment to restoring a decisive margin of US strategic 'superiority', and in his campaign speeches he repeatedly expressed an anxiety that McNamara's readiness to accept the logic of MAD threatened the political will of US leaders. Nixon had concluded that the US had derived a political leverage from its nuclear superiority in the 50s and 60s which it should recover as quickly and effectively as possible.[3] Though both he and Kissinger had to go through the shock of assimilating 'parity' they did not accept it as a desirable state of affairs,[4]

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1. 'Should deterrence fail' - writes Gray - 'it is entirely possible that an American attempt to employ nuclear weapons flexibly in a controlled manner would founder on disrupted and severed C3I and/or on a totally non-cooperative Soviet style of war waging. These strong possibilities do not absolve American policy-makers in peace time from the duty of providing for holding a catastrophe to the level of a catastrophe, rather than - through their conscious neglect - ensuring, indeed guaranteeing, that a nuclear catastrophe would become a holocaust.' (C.S. Gray, '"Dangerous to Your Health": The Debate over Nuclear Strategy and War', Orbis, Vol 26, No 2, 1982, 344). Here everything hinges on the not very clear semantic distinction between 'catastrophe' and 'holocaust'.
2. As Ball has shown, despite the changes in avowed US strategic policies over the past three decades, war plans have always covered Soviet military forces, stockpiles, bases and installations; economic and industrial centres; political and administrative centres; and, after 1950, the Soviet nuclear forces. (See his Targeting for Strategic Deterrence, Adelphi Paper No 185, IISS, London, Summer 1983, 4, 39)
3. H.J. Brenner, 'The Theorist as Actor. The Actor as Theorist', Stanford Journal of International Studies, Vol 7, 1972, 112
4. Thus, Jerome Kahan's point that 'by proclaiming a doctrine of sufficiency in 1969, President Nixon officially accepted nuclear parity between the US and the USSR as a fact of life for the 1970s...' is highly misleading, for, as I shall try to show in the course of this discussion, the changes in US nuclear doctrine under Nixon and Kissinger were in fact attempts to escape the consequences of 'parity' and to preserve a politically useful American advantage through qualitative superiority. (See J.H. Kahan, Security in the Nuclear Age, The Brookings Insti- [illegible] 1975, 144)

and soon moved to begin the first major change in American war plans since the McNamara initiatives of 1961-62. This process of apparent innovation in the sphere of nuclear policy was one of the most significant products - for its political implications - of the 'Kissinger years' in US foreign policy, and a highly revealing ideological phenomenon that crucially reinforced the dilemmas of 'conservative realism' and its conception of politics as technique.

To recapitulate, the 'flexible response' doctrine coincided with an era of ascendancy which allowed a more sophisticated analysis of 'threats' and means of response, a time of confidence in US superiority, aims, and capabilities. The heyday of 'mutually assured destruction' coincided with the prolonged political-military test of the war in South East Asia. During those bitter years, the realities of social conflict, both external and domestic, lessened the influence of the nuclear factor in American strategic concerns. But the shock of defeat in Vietnam gave a new lease of life to the search for a more assertive nuclear strategy, and to the attempts to restore the strength of nuclear power as an instrument of politics. The move away from MAD-related notions to a declaratory emphasis on 'limited nuclear options' during the Kissinger years should therefore be seen as an effort to respond to a deteriorating political situation through the manipulation of a technical threat. The US 'strategic retrenchment' after Vietnam meant above all a reduction in its ability to intervene with general purpose forces abroad; the 'defence gap' thus created was now to be at least to some extent filled by having recourse to a 'new' nuclear employment policy.

The 'Schlesinger doctrine'[1] was not only a response to a changed political climate, but was also related to a series of technological innovations in the fields of precision and control of nuclear forces that, in theory, increased the plausibility of scenarios for 'selective' nuclear exchanges.[2] These technological

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1. For relevant excerpts from Secretary Schlesinger's public elaboration of the 'Limited Nuclear Options' doctrine, see Survival IISS, March-April 1974, January-February 1975, and May-June 1975
2. In particular, the new 'Command Data Buffer System' for rapid re-targeting, plus the addition of the MK-12A warhead, the NS-20 guidance system to the Minutemen missiles, and, of course, MIRV. (See R.K. Betts, 'Nuclear Peace: Mythology and Futurology' The Journal of Strategic Studies, Vol 2, No 1, May 1979, 99

developments, however, only reinforced the essentially political thrust of the retreat from MAD, for in fact the substance of the 'new' strategy - publicly articulated by Secretary of Defence James Schlesinger between 1974 and 1975 - was neither 'novel' nor 'revolutionary'[1]: counterforce targeting and the provision of war-fighting flexible 'options' were important features of US nuclear war planning since the McNamara days and even before. Therefore the basic 'novelty' of the 'Schlesinger doctrine' consisted of its actual declaration, and the crucial question to ask about it is: what were the reasons that led US leaders, at that moment, to emphasize again 'flexibility', 'selectivity', and war-fighting counterforce 'options' at the level of nuclear strategy ? The answer, as I said earlier, is political: the 'new' doctrine was the culmination of a reassessment of US foreign policy challenges and means of response,[2] and the prelude to a renewed drive for hegemonic advantage in the nuclear field. Schlesinger made it clear that his 'new' strategy both increased the chances of nuclear war, and envisaged a new period of US 'superiority' at least in accurate counterforce weaponry.[3] The public articulation of the 'new' doctrine presaged a record US Defense Department Budget, submitted to the American Congress by Nixon on 4 February 1974 and asking for massive expenditures for the qualitative upgrading of the nuclear arsenal.[4]

In operational terms, Schlesinger's innovations led to the drawing up of 'small packages' of targets from which the US President could choose, including strikes of 'down to a few weapons'.[5] Betts has argued that, before Schlesinger, contingency

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1. Ball, 'Déjà Vu', 150
2. During 1969 and 1970 the Nixon Administration undertook a series of studies aimed, among other things, at increasing the flexibility of existing nuclear war plans. In 1972, the Department of Defense began to study possible revisions of the SIOP. Between 1972 and 1974 a full-scale inter-agency review was undertaken, resulting finally in the Schlesinger statements of 1974-5. (Lynn Davis, Limited Nuclear Options, Adelphi Paper No 121, IISS, London, 1976, 3-4)
3. Ball, 'Déjà Vu', 160. See also Secretary Schlesinger's testimony to the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, US-USSR Strategic Policies, USGPO, Washington DC 1974, 28
4. J.R. Schlesinger, Annual Defense Department Report, Fiscal Year 1975, USGPO, Washington DC, March 1974, 16-24; Ball, 'Déjà Vu', 219
5. US-USSR Strategic Policies, 9

plans had never been developed for options less than massive but more than puny: 'Theoretically forty or fifty missiles or bombers could have been dispatched, but...such action was impractical because it would have deranged the SIOP...'[1]. According to Ball, however, though the 'new' strategy required some re-targeting of missiles, the SIOP itself was not going to be radically changed.[2] What is clear is that, with the 'new' doctrine, the Nixon administration hoped to extend the political relevance of nuclear weapons to a wider variety of conflicts. As Schlesinger explained,

> Deterrence must operate across the entire spectrum of possible contingencies. We cannot afford gaps in its coverage that might invite probes and tests. In an era of nuclear parity, we cannot and should not rely primarily on the threat of massive replies to deter the great variety of contingencies that could arise in a nuclear crisis.[3]

His elaboration of the 'limited options doctrine'[4] left no doubts that the search for more 'selectivity' covered three aspects: first, limited nuclear 'options' against Soviet nuclear challenges at a level below that of all-out war; secondly, nuclear options against non-nuclear challenges and local aggression with the potential for escalation; and finally, a more discriminating strategy for general nuclear war. Thus, the aim of the 'new' doctrine was to restore the credibility of US nuclear threats across the board by covering a wide range of qualitatively different conflicts with contingency plans for nuclear attacks. The concept of 'escalation dominance' - the attainment of effective military superiority at a particular point in the escalation ladder[5] - would play a key role in this attempt to

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1. Betts, 'Nuclear Peace: Mythology...', 99

2. Ball, 'Déjà Vu', 214

3. Annual Defense Department Report, Fiscal Year 1975, 4-5, 38

4. The main sources - apart from the documents already quoted - of Schlesinger's articulation of the 'limited options' doctrine are the Annual Defense Department Report, Fiscal Year 1976, USGPO, Washington DC, February 1975, and US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Briefing on Counterforce Attacks, USGPO, Washington DC, September 1974

5. Freedman, The Evolution..., 382

revitalize the political utility of nuclear strategy.[1] By confronting the other side with the choice between acceptance of a limited nuclear fait accompli or total escalation to societal suicide, the US would impose on the USSR a de facto recognition of 'limited nuclear war'.

To be sure, one of the targets - probably the most important - of the 'new' strategy was the USSR; but the 'challenges' to which Nixon referred in his public statements supporting the changes in nuclear doctrine - as opposed to the 'accidents' that worried McNamara - were not specified as being exclusively nuclear, and included political ones as well.[2] The problem was not limited to 'keeping the edge' against the USSR - which McNamara had been frittering away - but to restore the political instrumentality of nuclear war. Kissinger played a significant role in directing US nuclear strategy towards a renewed emphasis on counterforce 'flexibility', and he chaired several of the study groups that laid the groundwork for the 'limited options' doctrine.[3] This was totally in line with his life-long advocacy of nuclear war-fighting strategies, and the formulas of nuclear strategy, at their core, express the beliefs, perceptions, and intentions of policy-makers. For Kissinger, the crucial challenge of nuclear power to US leaders was to make nuclear weapons relevant in the pursuit of American foreign policy objectives. Force should never

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1. The Nixon administration also encouraged the design and development of a whole new range of weapons technologies for 'tactical' purposes, to make a tactical nuclear war-fighting posture appear more credible. (See Ball, 'Déjà Vu', 182-4). As Kissinger explained, 'If crises no longer produced fear of escalation to all-out war, they would also become more likely', and US threats to initiate a nuclear strike would 'become hollow', and there would be 'an exponential increase in the dangers to allies at levels of violence below general exchange'. (Years of Upheaval, 259). The new strategic situation therefore demanded a restoration of US dominance in the nuclear field. As he argued in a 1976 interview, 'the peace of the world will be threatened...not primarily by strategic forces but by geo-political changes, and to resist those geopolitical changes we must be able to resist regionally...By non-nuclear means, or perhaps even by nuclear means geared to the local situation. Non-nuclear means would always be preferable, but I don't want to exclude nuclear means in certain situations.' (US News and World Report, 15 March 1976, 28)

2. R. Nixon, A New Strategy for Peace, 91-2; Building for Peace, 170-74; The Emerging Structure of Peace, 156-8; Shaping a Durable Peace, 61-3

3. Kissinger, The White House Years, 199-222

be separated from diplomacy, and particularly in the nuclear era the key problem military strategy must solve is the creation of 'options' for policy, devising a 'spectrum of capabilities' with which to act in different kinds of conflict situations.[1] Thus, nuclear strategy should strive to 'establish a relationship between a policy of deterrence and a strategy for fighting a war in case deterrence fails';[2] and he consistently argued that the solution to this problem could be found in a nuclear employment policy for (a) limited nuclear war, and (b) counterforce targeting in general nuclear war.[3] In his view, the dilemma never resolved by MAD-related concepts was 'psychological':

> It was all very well to threaten mutual suicide for purposes of deterrence, particularly in case of a direct threat to national survival...[But] if deterrence failed and the President was finally faced with the decision to retaliate, who would take the moral responsibility for recommending a strategy based on the massive extermination of civilians...?[4]

What most preoccupied Kissinger about 'assured destruction' was that 'no President could make such a threat credible except by conducting a diplomacy that suggested a high irrationality';[5] but it is difficult to accept Kissinger's own beliefs in the possibility of actually using limited nuclear war as an instrument of policy as anything other than irrational. He summed up his thoughts on the matter by arguing that

> A war which began as a limited nuclear war would have the advantage that its limitations could have been established - and, what is more important, understood - well in advance of hostilities. In such a conflict, moreover, the options of the aggressor are reduced in range. Whereas in

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1. Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, 3-22, 132-73, 203-33; The Necessity for Choice, 1-9, 57-75, 169-80
2. Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons..., 132
3. ibid, 174-202. In his later book, The Necessity for Choice, Kissinger somewhat moderated his earlier almost fanatical enthusiasm for the potentialities of limited nuclear war, but he insisted that 'conventional war can be kept conventional only if we maintain, together with our retaliatory force, an adequate capability for limited nuclear war'. (81-98)
4. Kissinger, The White House Years, 216
5. ibid

> a conventional war the choice is between continuing the war with its existing restrictions or risking an expanding limited war, in a nuclear war the choice is the much more difficult one between the existing war and all-out conflict...[1]

But why, one may ask, would the adversaries of the US accept to limit their own possible response to a form of warfare in which they would face certain defeat ? Also, to what kind of conflict is Kissinger referring ? What is its political nature ? If the situation is one of total hostility, how could it be possible for either side to believe that the first use of nuclear weapons by its enemy was not the first step on the road to total war ?[2] There is a profound contradiction - not uncommon in theoretical writings on nuclear 'options' and limited war - between, on the one hand, Kissinger's belief in the power of 'reason', conveyed through diplomacy in a manner that can be understood even by nuclear combatants, and, on the other hand, his willingness to manipulate irrationality - in the form of escalation on the nuclear ladder - as a negotiating weapon. He insisted, on one side, that 'an energetic diplomacy addressed to the problem of war limitation can serve as a substitute for lack of imagination on the part of the Soviet General Staff', but on the other side he argued that 'the emphasis of traditional diplomacy on "good faith" and "willingness to come to an agreement" is a positive handicap when it comes to dealing with a power dedicated to overthrowing the international system'.[3] These two propositions, expressed in the same book, cannot, however, be mutually reconciled with one another.

There is, of course, an unavoidable paradox inherent in nuclear strategy: deterrent effect is maximized by threatening the most catastrophic consequences to follow immediately upon the outbreak of hostilities, yet decision-makers would in principle like to retain as many 'options' as possible short of holocaust in the event of deterrence failing.[4] Several questions, however,

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1. Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons..., 193-4
2. On this specific dilemma in Kissinger's contributions as a strategist, see D. Landau, Kissinger: The Uses of Power, Robson Books, London, 1974, 47-8
3. Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons..., 317-8
4. See Brenner, 'The Theorist as Actor...', 122

should be asked: first, is this flexibility of choice - depending on political-technical control - attainable ? Secondly, is a declaratory policy of 'options' desirable as a means of strengthening deterrence, and what is its political meaning ? Finally, should weapons be specifically procured for an 'options' policy ? Most authors agree that 'flexibility' is desirable, that 'military policy' should 'provide forces and strategies that permit at least the possibility of limiting the war, forces and strategies that can buy time, not consume it',[1] and that the intention of the Schlesinger strategy was to limit casualty and damage levels in the event that war does occur - and, by providing a wide spectrum of nuclear war-fighting capabilities, 'to ensure that the reduced expectation of casualties and damage does not lead to an increase in the probability of war (and especially of limited nuclear war).'[2] This is the crux of the matter, for an increase in 'war-fighting capabilities' leads unavoidably to an increase in the 'probability of war', and a declaratory policy of 'options' coupled with a 'war-fighting' weapons procurement policy inevitably encourages the use of nuclear weapons as instruments of national policy. And this was in fact the intention behind the 'Schlesinger's doctrine'; it rested on the same illusions of'control' that have characterized all attempts to 'rationalize' nuclear war, but its political import was clear: to 'channel' the power of the nuclear arsenal into the mainstream of international confrontation.[3]

Thus, if nuclear strategy, at its core, is reducible to the perceptions, beliefs, and intentions - that is, the

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1. Schilling, 73
2. Ball, 'Déjà Vu', 228. See also Friedberg, 55
3. The SALT agreements, as Kissinger correctly perceived, did not preclude or hinder US attempts to devise alternative strategies for the conduct of nuclear war. In the words of Gerald Smith, chief of the US SALT delegation, Nixon accepted SALT because he 'knew it was politically and economically impractical for his administration to mount major new strategic programs'. (Doubletalk, Doubleday, New York, 1980, 22); but both he and Kissinger saw in SALT 'an opportunity to redress the strategic balance' (Kissinger, The White House Years, 550), and this would be achieved first by moderating Soviet offensive developments, by accelerating US programmes as soon as conditions permitted, and by declaring a policy of 'options' which tried to extract advantages from American qualitative superiority. (See Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, 260, 998; For the Record, 206)

ideology - of policy-makers, the revival of counterforce and 'limited options' ideas in the Kissinger-Nixon years was an expression of their belief that there is potential utility in the qualified use of nuclear weapons as an instrument of policy. I shall now turn to a more in-depth analysis of the ideological background to this belief, which is rooted both in a certain view of the nature of the nuclear 'order' and in the 'perversion of relevance' in nuclear strategy that results from the notion of politics as 'technique'.

IDEOLOGY AND THE NATURE OF THE NUCLEAR ORDER

A key component of the 'realist' view of politics that I have tried to characterize in this study, is the presumption that political processes can be subjected to the control of technical means used with sufficient determination and efficiency. Thus, even though political 'realists' like Kissinger usually accept that there is a clear distinction between nature, which is the domain of necessity, and history, where presumably man demonstrates his freedom,[1] and therefore that there is an intrinsic element of unpredictability in all historic change, the direction this change takes is seen as decisively influenced by the tempo of technological innovation. The enormous impact of nuclear technology upon contemporary international relations has even led some authors - who oppose this version of 'realism' - to argue that we have arrived at a situation where men have become the servants of the very instruments fashioned for their own mastery of nature and history.[2] These views about the 'inertial thrust'[3] and 'gathering determinism'[4] of the nuclear competition tend, however, to misconceive the essentially political nature of the motivating force that drives the nuclear arms race forward. The political impulse behind the relentless search for a way out of the dilemmas of deterrence is grounded on a conception of politics developed solely from the strategic point of view as technical mastery over men and nature, and the influence of this notion of politics helps to explain the recurrent belief in the possibility of using nuclear war as a rational instrument of state policy.

As noted earlier,[5] Hobbes's rationalism, his view of politics as a rigorous science directed toward the expert mastery of objectified tasks, his attempts to apply the newly discovered

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1. Kissinger, The Meaning of History, 22-3
2. W. Leiss, The Domination of Nature, Braziller, New York, 1972, 158
3. E.P. Thompson, 'Deterrence and Addiction', in F. Barnaby and G. Thomas (eds), The Nuclear Arms Race: Control or Catastrophe ? F. Pinter, London, 1982, 55
4. E.P. Thompson, 'Notes on Exterminism, the Last Stage of Civilization', in Thompson et al, Exterminism and Cold War, Verso, London, 1982, 27
5. See Chapter 2, Section II, of this study

aptitudes of making to the realm of human affairs, as well as his idea that only what I am going to make will be real,[1] broke decisively with the classic, Aristotelian notion of politics as the doctrine of the good and just life. The practical problem of the virtuous life of the citizens of the <u>polis</u> was transformed into the technical problem of regulating social intercourse so as to ensure order in the state.[2] This was a crucial step in the transformation of the idea of politics as an instrument toward the realization of <u>practical</u> goals - dependent on the open discussion of principles and values - into a conception of politics as the solution of <u>technical</u> problems through the scientifically rationalized control of objectified processes.[3] This 'constructivistic' view of knowledge can be expressed by the formula that, since man has himself created the institutions of society and civilization, he must also be able to <u>control</u> them and <u>alter</u> them at will so as to satisfy his purposes and wishes. But this 'technical rationality' is not, as some have argued,[4] the inevitable product of scientific and technological progress; 'it is not' - in Hayek's words - '...the progress of science which threatens our civilization, but scientific error, based usually on the presumption

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1. For an outstanding discussion of Hobbes's rationalism, and its impact on political theory, see the important book by Hannah Arendt, <u>The Human Condition</u>, The University of Chicago Press, 1958 (7th impression, 1971), Part VI, esp 294-304
2. Thomas McCarthy, <u>The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas</u>, Hutchinson, London, 1978, 4
3. On the difference between these two views of politics see Jürgen Habermas, <u>Toward a Rational Society</u>, Heinemann, London, 1971, 82-5, 102-4, 116-7; also Arendt, Part V, 175-247. As Habermas points out, Machiavelli's 'realpolitical' demystification of the idea of politics was also an attempt to reduce the practical knowledge of politics to a technical skill - lacking, however, Hobbes's epistemological sophistication: 'For the Ancients, too, the politicians entrusted with the direction of the state were to combine their prudence with certain capabilities, say the mastery of economics or of military strategy. With Machiavelli, however, only the 'mechanical' workmanlike skill of the <u>strategist</u> remains for politics.' (See <u>Theory and Practice</u>, 50-51, 54-9) (emphasis mine)
4. For example, Herbert Marcuse, who argues that 'the very concept of technical reason is perhaps ideological...Technology is always a historical-social <u>project</u>: in it is projected what a society and its ruling interests intend to do with men and things. Such a "purpose" of domination is "substantive" and to this extent belongs to the very form of technical reason.' (in <u>Negations: Essays in Critical Theory</u>, Beacon Press, Boston, 1968, 223)

of knowledge which in fact we do not possess.'[1] Thus, when Jonathan Schell, for instance, argues that 'It is fundamental to the shape and character of the nuclear predicament that its origins lie in scientific knowledge rather than in social circumstances',[2] he makes two mistakes: in the first place, he does not clarify the specific influence of 'constructivism' upon the peculiar nature of scientific-technological progress in our societies; secondly, he does not take into account the extent to which those 'social circumstances' are in themselves a product of the organization of the body politic according to the demands of 'technical reason'.

This epistemological and philosophico-political dimension has been almost completely left out of the debate on the dilemmas of nuclear strategy;[3] as a result, profound misunderstandings have developed with respect to the following: (a) the ideological basis (in the sense of 'fundamental ideology') that lies behind the constant search for a technological solution to the apparently unchallengeable riddles of nuclear strategy; (b) the nature of the nuclear 'order' and the possibilities of 'control' and 'limitation' of nuclear war; (c) finally, the prospects of technical means for reducing the risks of war and strengthening 'deterrence'.

In reference to the first point, it is frequently argued that the arms race has its origins in the 'mutual suspicion of each other's political purposes', in 'inter-service rivalry', and the fact that in today's rapidly changing technological world 'there are always ways of making things "better".'[4] No doubt this is partly true, as it is basically correct to say

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1. Hayek, 'The Errors of Constructivism', 20
2. J. Schell, The Fate of the Earth, Knopf, New York, 1982, 100
3. In my readings of the literature on this subject, I have only come across one passage dealing explicitly with these matters, by Kolkowitz, who locates the tendency to search for technical solutions to the problem of 'control' of nuclear war 'in the scientific spirit of the Enlightenment and in the optimistic tradition of the more recent period which envisaged man's ability to control, manage and order conflict by rational scientific and technological means.' (Quoted by Ian Clark, Limited Nuclear War, Martin Robertson, Oxford, 1982, 160)
4. See, for instance, Solly Zuckerman, 'Nuclear Storm Warnings' The Spectator, 9 April 1983, 14

that, given that deterrence is not a strategy for waging war but rather a 'non-strategy' or an 'anti-strategy', it embodies a paradox that 'is almost too much for the military mind, and its civilian counterparts, to bear'.[1] But it is necessary to go beyond this to discover the roots of the technological imperative in a view of human knowledge, according to which 'objective truth is not given to man but...he can know only what he makes himself'.[2] The political implications of this view of knowledge have already been discussed; they must, however, be complemented with the observation that, in the field of nuclear strategy, the thrust towards war can also be interpreted as a temptation to know.[3]

The clarification of the view of knowledge underlying the growth of the notion of politics as technique, and of technology as domination of natural and social processes,[4] is a preliminary condition for understanding both what kind of order the nuclear 'order' is, and the persistence of the constructivistic fallacy in the attempts to 'control' it. The traditional dichotomy - deriving from the ancient Greeks - between phenomena which are 'natural' in the sense that they are wholly independent of human action, and those which are 'artificial' or 'conventional' in the sense that they are the product of human design, has been enormously influential in Western thought, and its impact can be detected in the discussions on nuclear strategy. This division, however, is misleading, for it does not take into account a distinct category of phenomena which are the result of human

1. T. Draper, 'Nuclear Temptations', The New York Review of Books, January 19 1984, 43

2. Arendt, 293

3. Arendt describes this view of knowledge as 'Perhaps the most momentous of the spiritual consequences of the discoveries of the modern age'; this was the conviction that 'In order to be certain one had to make sure, and in order to know one had to do. Certainty of knowledge could be reached only under a twofold condition: first, that knowledge concerned only what one had done himself...and second, that knowledge was of such a nature that it could be tested only through more doing.' (289-90)

4. Leiss, 101-65

action but not of human design.[1] Social phenomena, as Nagel explains, are not generally the intended results of individual actions; nevertheless 'the central task of social science is the explanation of phenomena as the unintended outcome of springs of action'.[2] Indeed it can be argued that social theory begins with the discovery that there exist orderly structures - such as language, morals, and the market - which are the product of the actions of many men but are not the result of human design.[3] The belief that this is not so, that orderly human structures must inevitably be the product of some thinking mind derives from our anthropomorphic habits of thought, from our difficulty in conceiving of an order which is not deliberately made and which aims at concrete purposes. 'Spontaneous' or 'grown' orders, however, differ from 'made' orders on three accounts: (1) Their degree of complexity is not limited to what a human mind can master; (2) Their existence need not manifest itself to our senses but may be based on purely abstract relations which we can only mentally reconstruct; and (3) Not having been 'made' they cannot legitimately be said to have a particular purpose, although our awareness of their existence may be - and usually is - crucial for our pursuit of a great variety of different, and sometimes contrasting, purposes.[4]

Spontaneous orders are not necessarily complex, but unlike deliberate human arrangements they may achieve any degree of complexity. These very complex orders, comprising more particular facts than any brain could ascertain or manipulate, can be brought about 'only through forces inducing the formation of

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1. F.A. Hayek, 'The Results of Human Action but not of Human Design', in Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics, 96-105. It is interesting to note the similarity between this insight and Hegel's notion of 'the cunning of reason', by which he tried to call attention to the paradoxical aspect of human history, wherein 'reason sets the passions to work for itself, while that which develops its existence through such impulsion pays the penalty, and suffers loss.' (G.W.F. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of History, George Bell & Sons, London, 1894, 34)
2. E. Nagel, 'Problems of Concept and Theory Formation in the Social Sciences', in Science, Language and Human Rights, American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division, Vol I, Philadelphia, 1952, 54
3. F.A. Hayek, Law, Legislation, and Liberty, Vol I ('Rules and Order'), Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1973, 37
4. ibid, 38

spontaneous orders'.[1] The nuclear 'order', I think, is of this kind; in other words, it is a 'grown' order that has attained a degree of complexity which far exceeds any which could have been achieved by deliberate organization. This has been convincingly demonstrated by Paul Bracken in his brilliant study on the problems of command and control of nuclear forces.[2] Its importance lies not so much in the author's conclusion - pointed out many times before - that there are seemingly insurmountable obstacles to maintaining political control in a thermonuclear war, but in his analysis of the security organizations built by both the US and the USSR, 'the most complex technological apparatus ever conceived', which have 'institutionalized a major nuclear showdown'.[3] Bracken, however, argues that the problem with this enormously complex nuclear system is that it has been built 'without thinking through its purpose or how to control it',[4] thus implying that it is not only <u>desirable</u> but also <u>feasible</u> to attain these aims; but the whole thrust of his analysis tends to show, rather, that the gap between increasingly more complicated, 'abstract', nuclear strategies, and the progressively more deficient - not sophisticated enough - command structures designed to carry them out simply <u>cannot be filled</u>. This would imply subjecting the nuclear 'order' - a 'grown' order - to the constraints characteristic of 'made' orders and the dictates of a 'controlling mind': an impossible task,[5] for what in fact happens - adapting Adam Ferguson's phrases - is that '[nuclear] nations stumble upon establishments, which are indeed the result of human action, but not the execution of any human design'.[6]

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1. Hayek, <u>Law, Legislation...</u>, 38. See also Hayek's essay, 'Dr Bernard Mandeville' in <u>New Studies in Philosophy</u>, 249-66
2. P. Bracken, <u>The Command and Control of Nuclear Forces</u>, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1983
3. <u>ibid</u>, 239. As he puts it, these 'fantastically complex nuclear command organizations' parallel the conflict institutions built in the decade before 1914, 'but on a far more spectacular and quick-reacting scale'. (3). See also Desmond Ball, <u>Can Nuclear War be Controlled ?</u>, Adelphi Paper No 169, IISS, London, Autumn 1981, 36-7
4. Bracken, 239
5. See Bracken, 4, 8, 30-1, 52-3, 58, 220-21, 232-5, 240-42
6. Quoted by Hayek, Dr Bernard Mandeville', 264

Once the nuclear order is seen as a 'grown' order in the sense here explained, it is easier to understand the mistake of both those who - like Thompson - believe that the nuclear systems evolve through some kind of doomsday inertia, and also of those - like Kissinger - who attribute to them the character of 'made' orders - losing sight of the importance of the unforeseen consequences of human action.[1] The nuclear order is not a 'process without a subject', but its enormous complexity has freed it from the whims of any of its multiple creators. All attempts to make it serve the 'purpose' of a centralized 'command authority' are expressions of the constructivistic fallacy which attributes to civilian and military leaders, at a given moment, a comprehensive knowledge that they do not, and cannot, possess.[2]

Clausewitz had argued that strategy can have a negative object, and emphasized that, historically, this has often been the case, the aim of strategy being to make clear to the other side 'the improbability of victory...[and] its unacceptable cost'[3] that is, deterrence. The threat of annihilation and the difficulties in the way of giving any clear meaning to the notion of 'victory'

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1. See, for example, F. Halliday, 'The Sources of the New Cold War', in Exterminism and Cold War, 298

2. I know of only one (Western) nuclear strategist who has adequately described the real nature of the nuclear 'order'. I refer to Michael Mandelbaum, who has written that the nuclear 'regime' is a 'complicated, intricate, and delicate entity; it does not spring from a grand design...is an expression of the wisdom of history...is like a living organism.' (See his essay, 'International Stability and Nuclear Order: The First Nuclear Regime', in D.C. Gompert et al, Nuclear Weapons and World Politics: Alternatives for the Future, McGraw Hill, New York, 1977, 78). There has also been a process of 'militarization' of the idea of politics in Marxist - and, particularly, Soviet - thought, that in some respects parallels the fate of 'realist' conceptions in the West. A detailed discussion of the Soviet approach to nuclear strategy is beyond the scope of this study. However, it should be pointed out that the strongly sociological bent of the Marxist tradition, its fundamental concern with the social basis of political life, has contributed to reducing the impact of the technological obsession in Soviet strategic theory - as it is publicly formulated. On this point, see J. Erickson, 'The Soviet View of Deterrence: A General Survey', Survival, November - December 1982, 242-51; R.L. Arnett, 'Soviet Attitudes Towards Nuclear War: Do They Really Think They Can Win ?', The Journal of Strategic Studies, Vol 2, No 2, 1979, 172-91

3. Clausewitz, 91

in thermonuclear war have up to now preserved some sort of 'peace' between the superpowers and their main alliance systems, but this 'stability' - to quote Freedman - 'depends on something that is more the antithesis of strategy than its apotheosis - on threats that things will get out of hand, that we might act irrationally, that possibly through inadvertence we could set in motion a process that in its development and conclusion would be beyond human control and comprehension'.[1]

The search for a nuclear strategy with a positive object poses excessive conceptual demands upon technology; paradoxically, however, this technological apparatus itself is of such complexity that it cannot, or, rather, should not, be relied upon to implement a politically controlled and 'rational' war. But the political impulse behind technology continues its relentless pressure, systematically refining the instruments of destruction that will make knowledge and domination possible. It is this political impulse, and its ideological roots, that lie at the roots of the recurrent US attempts to overcome the dilemmas of deterrence - the barrier of the irrationality of nuclear war - through technological means. This is why it is misleading to argue - as Litwak does - that there is a 'fundamental difference' between the 'flexible response' counterforce doctrine promulgated in 1962 and the 1974-1975 'Schlesinger doctrine', because, as Litwak puts it, the former 'sought to translate American numerical superiority into a rational, credible, war-winning strategy' as a means of imposing a 'pattern of stability' on the Soviet Union, whereas the latter was 'not regarded as a war-winning strategy'; rather, its purpose was to 'influence Soviet intentions and thereby reinforce deterrence at a time in which there was 'a narrowing range of credibility'.[2] Quite apart from the fact that both 'doctrines' were formulated to a larger or lesser extent with the aim of 'influencing Soviet intentions', the point that, in my view, should be emphasized is that both of them respond to the same purpose of giving nuclear war a 'rational' status as an instrument of policy, and both reveal a very similar degree of

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1. Freedman, The Evolution..., 400
2. R.S. Litwak, Détente and the Nixon Doctrine: American Foreign Policy and the Pursuit of Stability 1969-1976, Ph D Thesis, LSE, 1981, 287-8

confidence in the value of technology as a 'solution' to at least some of the crucial challenges of the nuclear age.

American decision-makers, to be sure, have not been unaware of the credibility problems involved in the attempts to establish a 'linkage' between the nuclear arena and political crises in 'gray areas', but they nevertheless have persistently tried to create this connection, and will, I think, continue to do so, unless and until a substantial change in the ideological presuppositions of US foreign policy takes place. On this change, also, depends the possibility of stopping, and perhaps reversing, the pace of the arms race on the US side - the only superpower which is an 'open' society, but which has also more consistently sought to take the lead in the competition to perfect the instruments of nuclear warfare.

THE PERVERSION OF RELEVANCE IN NUCLEAR STRATEGY

In what is probably one of the most important political treatises of our times, Eric Voegelin presented a powerful case to the effect that there has been a continuous process of 'perversion of relevance' in the field of political philosophy, through the 'shift from theory to method', or, to put it differently, from substantive problems to purely methodological disputes.[1] Here I have argued that a similar process of 'perversion of relevance' has taken place in the field of nuclear strategy, through a substitution of technology for politics.

True, not all nuclear strategists have been unaware of this shift, and, particularly in recent years, increasing worries have been expressed about the dangers of forgetting that nuclear strategy is an instrument of foreign policy and not a substitute for it, and also that the so-called 'arms control' process is not an end in itself but a means to advance certain objectives within the context of a well-defined foreign policy. Nowadays it is being insistently said that 'strategic studies must reintegrate politics into its **analytical** framework', and that 'if the analysis is serious then politics is unavoidable'.[2] This realization of the perils involved in the 'technological obsession' that has dominated Western, and especially American, nuclear strategy is indeed a step forward in the right direction, but it will not generate a really substantial change of course unless the roots of the problem are definitely seen as deriving from the idea of politics at the centre of conservative-realism. It is all very well to advocate the 'reintegration of politics' within the framework of nuclear strategy, but the question remains, what politics ?, and for what purposes ?

More specifically, it is crucial to determine what exactly the 'perversion of relevance' in nuclear strategy consists of. In my view, there are two key factors to be taken into account. In the first place, the one-dimensional view of politics - in particular of international politics - characteristic of 'realism', as the domain of force, not of reason, and as an

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1. Voegelin, 10
2. L. Freedman, 'Indignation, Influence, and Strategic Studies', International Affairs, Vol 6, No 2, 1984, 219

instrument of 'order', not of justice. And in the second place, the overestimation of the utility of force - evident, for instance, in such books of contemporary nuclear strategy as Kissinger's Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy - which is closely connected to the belief in the human ability to control nature and the course of social events through technological means. These two traits of the process of 'perversion of relevance' are - to use Karl Deutsch's terminology - a manifestation of the 'sin of pride' in politics; they involve overestimation or overvaluation of the organization (in this case the US as a superpower) compared with its environment, of its past methods and commitments over new ones, and of its current will and inner structure over all possibilities of fundamental change:'The injunction to humility' - writes Deutsch -

> common to several of the great religions, seems to be aimed directly at many of these sources of failure. In its essence, humility is perhaps an attitude toward facts and messages outside oneself; and openness to experience as well as to criticism; and a sensitivity and responsiveness to the need and desires of others. Its opposite has traditionally been...the "sin of pride", the sin..."of seeing oneself out of proportion to the universe".[1]

The 'idolatry of technology' that has so negatively affected the development of nuclear strategy in the West is, I think, an obvious manifestation of Deutsch's 'sin of pride'.

It may seem ironic to accuse a conservative theorist and decision-maker such as Kissinger of committing this 'sin', which can be basically defined as involving a lack of awareness of the limits of power and superficial concern for the possibilities of human failure. After all - as the British conservative philosopher Michael Oakeshott has pointed out - to be a political conservative is presumably 'to prefer the familiar to the unknown, to prefer the tried to the untried, fact to mystery, the actual to the possible, the limited to the unbounded, the near to the distant, the sufficient to the superabundant, the convenient to the perfect, present laughter to utopian bliss'.[2] In other words,

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1. K.W. Deutsch, The Nerves of Government, The Free Press, New York, 1966, 229-30
2. M. Oakeshott, 'On Being Conservative', in Rationalism in Politics, Basic Books, New York, 1962, 169

conservatism is, in theory, a philosophy of moderation; in practice, however, because of its <u>situational</u> nature as an ideology committed to the defence of the established order, conservatism can easily assume a very <u>immoderate</u> character in accordance with the intensity of the challenge imposed upon it by the forces of change. In times of tranquillity, the conservative doubts the ability of man to reorganize society according to various ideal visions of what ought to be.[1] In times of upheaval, however, the conservative's concern for 'limits' usually gives way to the implacable use of power, and even - as I have tried to show in the preceding pages of this work - to the 'idolatry of technology' as the last recourse to maintain domination. 'Moderation' can sometimes be no more than complicity with intolerable conditions of existence for countries and peoples,[2] and - contrary to Oakeshott - 'reality' can sometimes be intolerable evil, not imperfect good.

To recapitulate what I have said in this section, possibly the most remarkable, yet paradoxical aspect of the works and statements of most contemporary nuclear strategists - and Kissinger is no exception - is that, though these works respond to a 'political' purpose, they lack any substantial analysis of the notion of 'politics' underlying their proposals,[3] or - almost as frequently - any significant discussion of the political context in which their theories will be applied.[4] This perversion of relevance in contemporary Western nuclear strategy has its roots in the 'classical' tradition of strategic thought, as

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1. W.R. Harbour, <u>The Foundations of Conservative Thought</u>, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1982, 5

2. M. Freeman, <u>Edmund Burke and the Critique of Political Radicalism</u>, Blackwell, Oxford, 1980, 243

3. See, for instance, Kissinger, <u>Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy</u>, 423-31. These are supposed to be the explicitly 'political' passages of the book, and yet the analysis remains at the level of arguments about the American 'reluctance to think in terms of power', and the 'Calvinist heritage' that 'has required success to display the attribute of justice'. Kissinger agrees that 'An imaginative diplomacy and bold programs' are required 'in order to overcome the contemporary revolution', but he has nothing to say about their contents. Examples like this could easily be multiplied.

4. This has led Michael Howard to ask about the postulates of 'nuclear theologians': 'this war they are describing, <u>what is it about ?</u>' ('On Fighting a Nuclear War', 9)

epitomized by Clausewitz's On War, which not only assumed that the concept of 'politics' is relatively unproblematical but also made armed power the last word in the theory of strategy 'by agreeing' - as Atkinson has put it - 'to sweep problems of social order under the rug'.[1] Though it is not easy, due to the 'closed' nature of the Soviet system, to ascertain precisely how they actually see the problem, Soviet strategists have usually been cautious in their declaratory approach to the nuclear question. Their Marxist ideological training - which emphasizes the notion that political objectives and not the performance of weapons systems determine the nature and scope of wars - has stopped them from endorsing theories of 'limited nuclear war' and 'options' for 'escalation dominance'.[2] But it is difficult to reconcile their apparent awareness of the perils of the 'idolatry of technology' with the enormous importance they attach to armed power as the technical dimension of the State's policy, and the general militarization of Soviet foreign policy. This process probably parallels the Western strategists' constantly intensifying obsession with technological prowess.

In the early Cold War years, the US National Security Council established that America should seek to 'maintain overwhelming superiority in atomic weapons' over its adversaries.[3] In most Cold War crises US leaders did not have confidence that they could engage in a nuclear war with the USSR and limit the damage done to their country to an 'acceptable' level. Most of them, however, still thought that the disparity in prospective damage to the Soviet Union, derived from the American quantitative

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1. Alexander Atkinson, Social Order and the General Theory of Strategy, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1981, 9. In this interesting study, the author convincingly shows that the Chinese strategic theory of prolonged people's war, based on land revolution and guerrilla warfare, represented a decisive break with the 'classical', Clausewitzian, tradition. His discussion of contemporary Communist views on the status of nuclear strategy is, however, rather perfunctory; in particular, he does not deal with the implications of Mao's celebrated 'paper tigers' theory of nuclear weapons. On this point, see André Glucksmann, Le Discours de la Guerre, Editions de l'Herne, Paris, 1967, 285-352

2. 'The Soviets' - writes Gerald Smith - 'seldom take up their strategic pens to try to rationalize the irrational.' (Doubletalk, 25)

3. See Etzold & Gaddis, 167

and qualitative advantages in nuclear forces, gave them the political leverage to prevail in any critical confrontation.[1] Circumstances have changed, but basic notions on the 'political' utility of the nuclear arsenals have not. It would be too easy to dismiss the view that 'superiority' in nuclear weapons and delivery systems conveys to the possessor meaningful political and military leverage as a 'persistent myth';[2] but in nuclear strategy it is the decision-makers' beliefs that matter, not an abstract conception of what is 'rational'. To be sure, the experience of the last thirty years shows that it is unlikely that a persuasive answer can be found to the challenge of designing a 'positive' nuclear strategy 'sufficiently plausible to appear as a tolerably rational course of action which has a realistic chance of leading to a satisfactory outcome'.[3] But this extraordinarily dangerous search will continue, at least on the American side, unless a new vision of politics controls the prevailing urge to dominate through the technologies of total destruction. As Kissinger's case showed, even though on the one hand he tried to impose some measure of control on the arms race, on the other he pushed for the development of more sophisticated war-winning strategies in the name of 'deterrence'. The precarious results of several years of efforts in the field of arms control under Kissinger's direction are an eloquent testimony both of the relentless drive of the technological arms race and of the ultimate futility of a foreign policy obsessed with 'stability'.

There remains a question that must be dealt with before turning to the concluding section of this study. If, as argued earlier, the nuclear order is a 'grown' order in the sense already explained, what could be the consequences of interfering with it, of trying to alter it in a direction opposite to the one it has been following during almost four decades, that is, the direction of real arms control and disarmament rather than of a continuous increase in the nuclear arsenals and all the paraphernalia of nuclear destruction ? Would this be likely to produce a loss of control and a drift towards nuclear 'anarchy' as dangerous, or perhaps even more so, than the risks deriving

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1. See Betts, 'Elusive Equivalence', 109
2. Moulton, 310
3. Freedman, The Evolution..., 395

from any attempt to implement a 'limited' nuclear war ?

It would, I think, be mistaken to try to answer these questions by pointing out that there is an obvious difference between the nuclear order 'at rest', as it were, and an activated nuclear order in conditions of war. In the first case, it might be said, the possibilities of political control are much greater as shown by the viability of the deterrence process; but this argument again leaves aside the fact that the deterrence process 'lives' through a systematic and permanent increase in the nuclear arsenals and the elaboration of ever more sophisticated 'war-winning' strategies, thus necessarily multiplying the risks of a cataclysmic war. We simply do not know what would happen if leaders in both the US and the USSR tried decisively to curb the momentum of the arms race, and even progressively dismantle the nuclear arsenals. The US - and, to a lesser extent, the USSR - is a society geared to constant technological innovation; its economy thrives on military expenditure and weapons production, and there are powerful domestic interests in both countries committed to maintaining the highest possible pitch of international confrontation as an 'insurance' against a foreign policy based on principles other than 'peace through strength'.

It is therefore quite clear that creative leadership in the field of foreign policy in the US would also require making the foundations of the American social and economic orders the object of critical reflection, which might perhaps come finally to the conclusion that technology may increase the weakness as well as the power of man, that at present we are probably more powerless over our own creations than we have ever been before, and that it is necessary to act politically in order to reverse this trend.

CONCLUSION

When Henry Kissinger assumed the office of Presidential Adviser for National Security Affairs, US foreign policy was undergoing a profound ideological crisis - both at the level of its legitimating 'liberal' claims and with respect to the 'fundamental' conservative-realist principles which had determined its formulation for decades. The myth of a 'liberal' foreign policy geared to the defence of democracy and human rights had been shattered, together with the 'realist' premises that had done so much to take the US into Vietnam; but at the same time a combination of international turmoil and domestic upheaval created propitious circumstances for a substantial change of direction. Innovation was possible and also necessary in order to avoid a repetition of costly mistakes, to relate the US to emerging forces in world politics, and to restore an equilibrium between the ethical values that give cohesion to a democratic society and its actions abroad.

There were basically two alternatives for the new Administration: in the first place, to implement a 'holding operation' that would preserve the basic features of the conservative-realist definition of the American national interest, but would also include diplomatic and tactical adjustments in response to a changed environment that demanded, at least temporarily, a more differentiated policy of global 'containment'. In theory, the second option open to the Kissinger-Nixon team was to set in motion a process of redefinition of the prevailing notions of national interest and security, and of the objectives of US foreign policy, questioning the 'fundamental' ideological presuppositions that had guided this policy until the Vietnam debacle, and also the role played by the 'liberal' ideological discourse as a legitimating device disconnected from US actions - particularly in the Third World.

What makes the 'Kissinger period' so relevant from the point of view of its impact on policy, and so illuminating as a case-study on the relationship between political ideas and foreign policy, is that Kissinger - and, to a lesser extent, Nixon - was aware of the need for change and had the intellectual prowess and effective power to face the challenge of innovation. He was,

however, crucially handicapped by an ideological framework rooted in the tenets of the 'realist' tradition and decisively permeated by a narrow view of politics that left almost no room for creativity. Kissinger, on one hand, had a sense of history, a concern for the limits of power, an awareness of the reality of human fallibility, and an abstract predilection for 'peace' - to be enjoyed by those powerful enough to participate in, and reap the benefits from, the 'balance of power'; but all these principles were subordinated to his conservative commitment to the defence of the international status quo and of the US privileged position in it. This ideological commitment prescribed a mission which not only justified, but also demanded, a militarized foreign policy that in the circumstances of the time also included the attempt to co-opt the USSR and China as interested guardians of 'stability'. In the Third World this policy led to a conscious and determined strengthening of the links between the US and the forces of popular repression and exploitation in Asia, Africa, and Latin America; it was a policy that militantly opposed Third World nationalism and that consequently turned its back on one of the most powerful forces shaping contemporary international relations.[1]

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1. As an example, among many others, of Kissinger's profound antipathy towards expressions of Third World nationalism, consider his view of the Suez crisis and of Nasser's significance as an Arab leader - as expounded in a May 1982 lecture delivered at Chatham House: 'Britain and France' - said Kissinger - 'were acting on a strategic analysis that may have been traditional and even self-serving but was far from frivolous...Eden's perception was that a dangerous precedent was being set: can there be any dispute of this today ? Had Nasser's course been shown a failure, a quite different pattern of international relations would have developed...As it turned out, Nasser's policy was vindicated; revolutions spread in the Middle East in the following years, and he has countless imitators today around the world...' ('Reflections on a Partnership: British and American Attitudes to Postwar Foreign Policy', International Affairs, Vol 58, No 4, 1982, 583). Thus, according to Kissinger, the US should have sided with the Franco-British neo-colonialist adventure even though it was widely condemned by the overwhelming majority of Third World nations and by many other countries as no more than a militarily incompetent and politically misguided expedition. In this passage Kissinger shows no understanding at all of Nasser's symbolic importance as an Arab nationalist, nor any sympathy towards Nasser's attempts to recover an independent voice for the Arab world, and he also begs the question why Nasser asked the Soviets for help as a result of Western hostility toward his nationalist aims.

From the point of view of its ideological foundations, what Kissinger introduced into the formulation of American foreign policy was a deeper sense of the historic and philosophical roots of conservatism, a willingness not to be blinded by the dogmas of official propaganda of the 'liberal' kind, and to try to act in accordance with a sober assessment of the balance of forces and the limitations it imposed on the exercise of US power. Thus, it is misleading to argue, as Caldwell has done, that Kissinger's 'grand design and grand strategy reflected continental European values rather than the idealistic approach to foreign policy of the United States'.[1] In fact, what Kissinger attempted to do was to take into account the reality of the breakdown of the domestic ideological consensus on foreign policy, and the effects of the deterioration of the 'liberal' myth, by making a more thoughtful estimate of what was possible in the new conditions. He in no way betrayed a supposedly 'idealistic' stand in US foreign policy, but simply de-emphasized a legitimating 'liberal' line of discourse which in any case had lost much of its previous mobilizing pull as a result of Vietnam. The view that the Nixon Administration 'robbed the Soviet-American conflict of the moral and political dimensions for the sake of which sacrifices could be intelligibly demanded by the government and willingly made by the people',[2] totally misses the point as to which were the real strengths and weaknesses of the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy. At the time they took office, the 'moral' element in US foreign policy had suffered an almost irretrievable blow; what they did was to go through a difficult transition period while avoiding as far as possible - and according to the traditional 'realist' interpretation of American foreign policy objectives - the sacrifice of interests that should, in their view, be preserved, and the compromise of positions that should be maintained intact. It has taken the Carter 'human rights' campaign, and the policies of a 'resurgent America' as - in President Reagan's words - 'the last, best hope of man'[3] to restore to some extent, especially in

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1. D. Caldwell, 'The Policies of Henry Kissinger', in Caldwell (ed), Henry Kissinger. His Personality and Policies, Duke University Press, Durham NC, 1983, 127
2. Podhoretz, 25
3. Quoted in R.G. Kaiser, 'Your Host of Hosts', The New York Review of Books, June 28 1984, 41

the US domestic scene, the conformist acquiescence in the 'liberal' mythology.

The Nixon-Kissinger policy reformulation called rhetorically for a new awareness of the inherent limits of US power, yet it was not prepared to accept a substantial change in role or to redefine American interests. Kissinger's powerful defence of the Administration's foreign policy record in his Memoirs makes a lot out of the effects of the Watergate crisis, which, in his view, 'prevented the full fruition of the prospects then before us - not only in nurturing US-Soviet relations but more generally in developing a new structure of international relations'.[1] I hope to have shown in this study why I think Kissinger's assertion distorts the nature and impact both of the Administration's policy - which sought to preserve the status quo and not to 'restructure' the international system - and also of the Watergate crisis - which was intimately connected to the Administration's generalized attempts to hide its policy-making process from democratic public scrutiny. On the other hand, a strong case can be made that Kissinger and Nixon should be given the credit for steering US foreign policy through a complex and demanding period, while reducing the scope of any devolution from the previously held American positions to the benefit of either major allies or adversaries.[2] But even Kissinger admits that his tactical 'successes' - in East-West relations, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Latin America for example - left 'a residue reflecting the unprecedented challenge of our period'; a conviction that 'the moral imperative of leadership in our time was to keep open the prospect, however slim, of a fundamental change..'[3]

This raises the issue of the criteria for judging a statesman's achievements. In his analysis of Metternich's diplomacy Kissinger provided a clue to the problem, when he argued that the Austrian Foreign Minister's 'identification of stability with the status quo in the middle of a revolutionary period... obscured the real nature of his achievements, that he was merely

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1. Kissinger, The White House Years, 1254
2. See Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, 235-46, 300-01; G. Liska, Beyond Kissinger, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1975, 64
3. Kissinger, The White House Years, 1255

hiding the increasing anachronism of Austria in a century of nationalism and liberalism: that he was but delaying the inevitable day of reckoning.'[1] My basic point in this study has been that Kissinger's tactical dexterity was deeply flawed by his lack of a political vision transcending the dogma of stability as an end in itself, and by his inability to go to the ideological roots of American foreign policy, subject them to criticism, and rescue them from the sterility of the conservative commitment to the defence of the international status quo.

All historical analogies must be treated with caution, for of course historical events are essentially unique. There is apparently nothing in common between the situation of Austria in the 19th century and the contemporary United States; and to many it would seem, to say the least, paradoxical to apply the term 'anachronistic' to what is surely the most dynamic and innovative society - in science, technology, social mores, and probably a score of other fields of human activity - of our troubled times. And yet, in the field of foreign policy, the US is governed by an ideology that clashes with the aspirations of many millions of people around the world, an ideology which seeks to accomplish the impossible task of maintaining 'order' - conceived as stability - in a world which 'will not allow three billion people to live as Americans live or to grow as the American economy grows',[2] and that is committed to blocking any significant restructuring of international relations to the benefit of the weaker countries in the system.

A foreign policy becomes ideologically anachronistic when, rather than creatively channelling the unsettling effects of a revolutionary period, it attempts systematically to destroy the possibilities for change; and this is precisely what US leaders have been trying to do in order to preserve their country's privileged position in the international system. This is what Kissinger tried to do, and though he scored a number of short-term tactical successes, he left the basic features of a policy geared to the struggle against social and political transformation in the Third World and to the use of force as the key

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1. Kissinger, A World Restored, 321
2. D.H. Rosenberg, 'Arms and the American Way', in B.M. Russett and A. Stepan (eds), Military Force and American Society, Harper & Row, New York, 1973, 193

instrument of international politics essentially unchanged. His conception of international relations was narrowly confined to interaction among principal governments, and was insensitive to the historical forces that are 'enlivening human awareness of inequities'[1] in the international system. The problem was not that he 'ignored'[2] the Third World, but that he acted towards it as a source of threats and not as a challenge for creativity, and while it is true that - to quote Carr - 'The business of the politician is to consider not merely what is morally or theoretically desirable, but also the forces which exist in the world, and how they can be directed or manipulated to probably partial realizations of the ends in view',[3] it is also true that the statesman's creativity depends on his ability to go beyond pure manipulation, and to pursue a mission dignified by values other than power, stability, and the defence of privilege. The state is indeed 'at best a mediator between the objective and the ultimate, between the norm and the value', in any given present[4], but it is difficult to discern this attempt at 'mediation' in the conduct of US foreign policy under Kissinger and Nixon.

Though one must not underestimate the fallibility of the critical enterprise and the power of resistances, the US is an open society and it is still possible to hope that its foreign policy can be gradually directed away from the premises of conservative-realism and reconciled in practice with a vision of politics based on the values of democracy, freedom, justice, and human rights. In a world of sovereign states, of course, where the US has to deal with other, very powerful and antagonistic states, there will always be a tension between ethics and power; but this reality should not be taken as an excuse to deprive the conduct of foreign policy of a moral framework, nor should it be considered a justification of conservatism. An alternative US foreign policy would not require the 'abolition of the sovereign state', nor the establishment of 'world government', but

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1. Falk, What is Wrong with Henry Kissinger's Foreign Policy ?, 35
2. M. Howard, 'Kissinger', in The Causes of War, 270
3. E.H. Carr, What is History ?, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1964, 128
4. P. Windsor, 'The Saviour from the Sea', Foreign Policy, Spring 1976, 175

a reorientation of politics and a redefinition of the US national interest on the basis of the critique - rather than the acceptance - of the international status quo. The constant struggle for a gradual reconciliation between political values and the actual practice of politics is essential for the preservation of the institutions of an open, liberal-democratic society, for if the choice between freedom and the defence of human rights, on the one hand, and coercion on the other, is treated as purely a matter of expediency, freedom is bound to be sacrificed in almost every instance. There probably are few restrictions on freedom which could not be justified on the grounds that we do not know the particular loss they will cause.[1] This is also true in the field of foreign policy, where the 'realist' perspective, that systematically sacrifices principles for the sake of expediency, has hardly produced the results that its defenders advocate: 'Instead of having achieved greater mastery over our fate we find ourselves in fact more frequently committed to a path which we have not deliberately chosen, and faced with "inevitable necessities" of further action which, though never intended, are the result of what we have done.'[2] This comment, though not specifically related to this discussion, in my view aptly encapsulates the evolution of US foreign policy toward the Third World, and also, I think of US nuclear strategy as an instrument of policy.

A reorientation of politics along the lines here suggested would of course demand a move away from the traditional Machiavellian 'realist' ethics of statecraft toward a cosmopolitan-Kantian conception of international morality,[3] an ethical-political posture that would not use the issue of human rights and the defence of freedom primarily as a tool of warfare against the USSR, but as a pillar of a policy clearly aimed at narrowing the gap between the values of a liberal society and its foreign policy practice.[4] Whether this 'reorientation' will ever take place is

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1. Hayek, Law, Legislation..., Vol I, 57
2. ibid, 59
3. See C.R. Beitz, Political Theory and International Relations, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1979, 181-3
4. S. Hoffman, 'Reaching for the Most Difficult: Human Rights as a Foreign Policy Goal', Daedalus, Vol 112, No 4, Fall 1983, 37-8

at this stage an open question, and even though there are ample grounds for pessimism, it must also be recognized that human beings are capable of bringing to consciousness the interpretations they tacitly accept, and can subject them to rational criticism. While I admit that ideological criticism is not in itself sufficient to bring about meaningful change, I also think that - as Bernstein writes - one must 'beware of thinking that history is working behind the backs of human beings, that critique can never be efficacious, never become a "material force"'.[1] This is why I believe that fundamental innovation - if and when it occurs - in US foreign policy can only be the result of criticism of the ideological premises that have guided its formulation for most of its history as a great power in the western hemisphere and the world at large.

Earlier in this study,[2] I argued that the challenge for the conservative statesman consists in transcending the present, thinking towards the future and trying to foresee the transformations that may occur, with the ultimate purpose of creatively channelling change and avoiding the high costs of revolution. I now conclude that - in spite of his brilliant tactical successes - Kissinger did not overcome this basic challenge; and while I agree that it is not easy to discern how far the failure of political ideology in the West thus far has been 'a failure of sobriety' and how far it has been 'a failure of imagination',[3] as far as Kissinger is concerned I submit, finally, that his failure to go beyond the narrow boundaries of 'realism' was definitely not a setback attributable to moral 'sobriety' but a failure of political imagination.

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1. R.J. Bernstein, The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory, Blackwell, Oxford, 1976, 236
2. See Chapter 4 of this thesis
3. Dunn, 114

NOTE ON SOURCES

In view of the widely divergent opinions expressed by a multitude of reviewers about the accuracy and significance of Kissinger's two massive volumes of Memoirs, a few final words on their value as a research tool for this study may be in order.

The key point that has to be made is that a decision-maker's reconstruction of his activities in office is in most cases a potentially important source of data about his beliefs, values, attitudes, and, in short, his ideological framework. As an additional source of data, a policy-maker's Memoirs provide one further means of access to his view of the world and of himself as an actor intervening in the shaping of historical events.[1]

A clear distinction should be made, however, between the actual utility of Memoirs as a source that can contribute to the understanding of a decision-maker's political convictions and attitudes, and their value and accuracy as a historical source. In other words, a review of Kissinger's sometimes highly distorted version of history should not be confused with an assessment of the Memoirs as reflecting the author's own ideological perspective.

In this study I have tried to show that, for example, Kissinger's account of the origins and development of the US intervention in South East Asia and Chile, and also of the purposes of American foreign policy in general, leaves much to be desired so far as historical truthfulness is concerned. On the other hand, I think that the contents of both The White House Years and Years of Upheaval confirm the point that Kissinger had a well-defined belief system, and that he acted on it; also, as Starr has emphasized, these volumes of Memoirs indicate that Kissinger 'framed his retrospective in terms of that belief system'.[2] In sum, Kissinger both reconstructed and described his actions in office in a manner consistent with his ideological belief system.

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1. H. Starr, 'The Kissinger Years. Studying Individuals and Foreign Policy', International Studies Quarterly, Vol 24, No 4, 1980, 469. This is an excellent analysis of the continuity between Kissinger's scholarly works and his Memoirs.

2. ibid, 493

Thus, I disagree with Tuchman's view that 'The book (White House Years) is all record, no assessment',[1] and share Michael Howard's point that Kissinger's Memoirs are 'an apologia ...in the literal meaning of the word: a presentation of his beliefs'.[2] This is why I have used them confidently as a source in several sections of this work. Much the same can be said about Nixon's own volume of recollections. It would of course be absurd to take him at his word when he tries to disentangle the various threads of, for instance, the Watergate affair, but the book is invaluable as a guide to Nixon's views on politics in general, and international politics in particular. Not all Memoirists reveal so much about themselves, their beliefs and attitudes, as Kissinger and Nixon have done. In this sense I think it is fair to say that they have made a significant contribution to the study of their period in office.

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1. Barbara W. Tuchman, 'Kissinger: Self-Portrait', in Practising History, Macmillan, London, 1983, 219
2. M. Howard, The Causes of War, 267

Table 1

Twenty Largest US Trading Partners, 1981

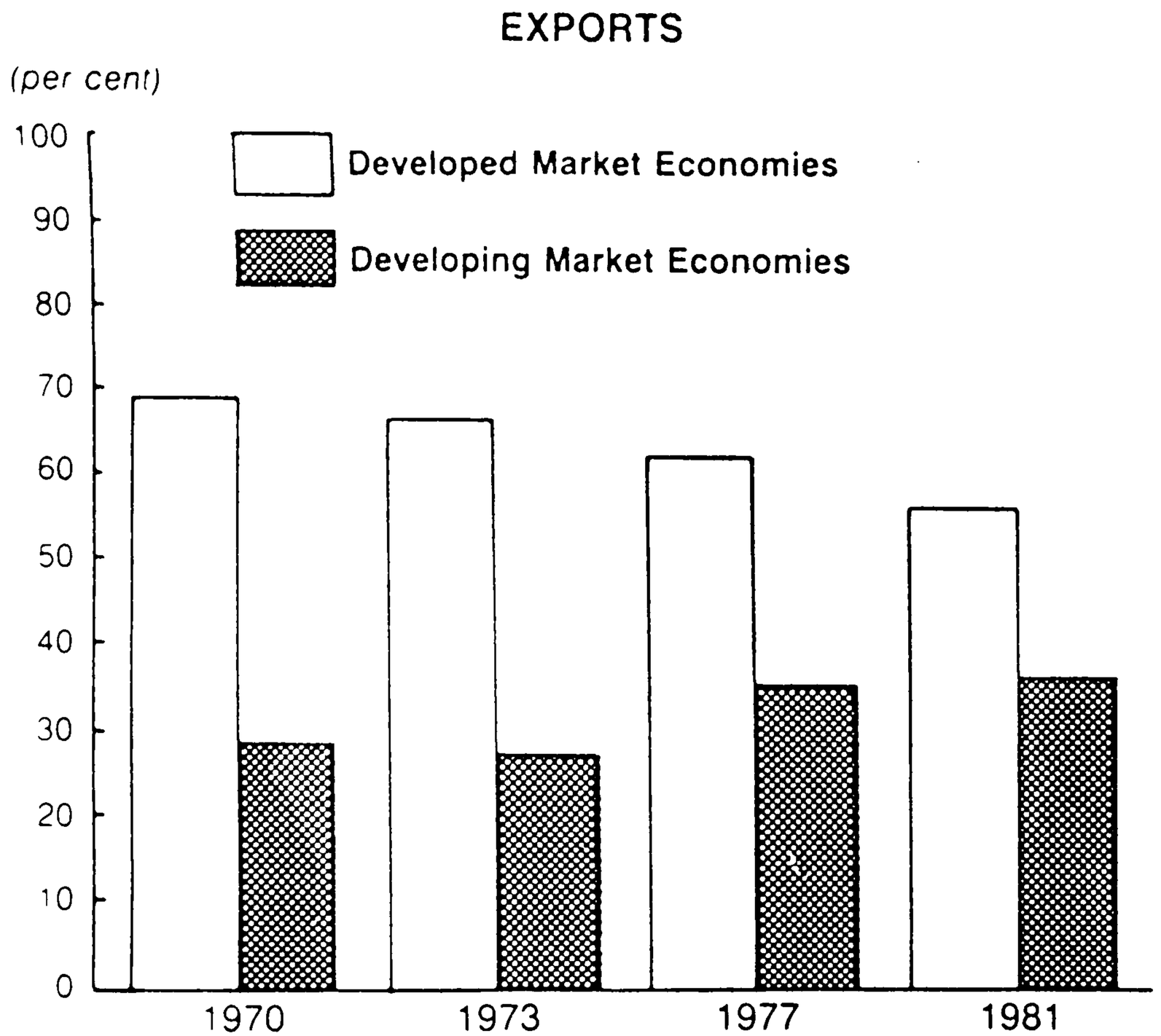
($ billions and percentages)

The twenty largest US trading partners, in terms of total merchandise transactions, include eleven developing countries, which together account for more than 26% of all such transactions and almost 22% of all US exports. Mexico is the third largest trading partner of the United States.

	Total Transactions	Exports	Imports
Canada	$ 86.0	$ 39.6	$ 46.4
Japan	59.4	21.8	37.6
Mexico	31.6	17.8	13.8
United Kingdom	25.2	12.4	12.8
Saudi Arabia	21.7	7.3	14.4
Germany, Fed Rep	21.7	10.3	11.4
France	13.2	7.3	5.9
Taiwan	12.3	4.3	8.0
Venezuela	11.0	5.4	5.6
Netherlands	11.0	8.6	2.4
Nigeria	10.7	1.5	9.2
Italy	10.6	5.4	5.2
Korea, Rep	10.2	5.1	5.1
Brazil	8.3	3.8	4.5
Belgium-Luxembourg	8.1	5.8	2.3
Hong Kong	8.0	2.6	5.4
Australia	7.7	5.2	2.5
Indonesia	7.3	1.3	6.0
Libya	6.1	0.8	5.3
Algeria	5.7	0.7	5.0
Total, 20 Countries	$375.8	$167.0	$208.8
Total, 11 Developing Countries	132.9	50.6	82.3
Total US Trade	$495.0	$233.7	$261.3
11 Developing Countries as % of Total US Trade	26.8%	21.7%	31.5%

Source of Tables 1-5 : J.P. Lewis and V. Kallah (eds), US Foreign Policy and the Third World: Agenda 1983, Praeger, New York, 1983, 180-86

Table 2 : US Trade with Developed and Developing Countries



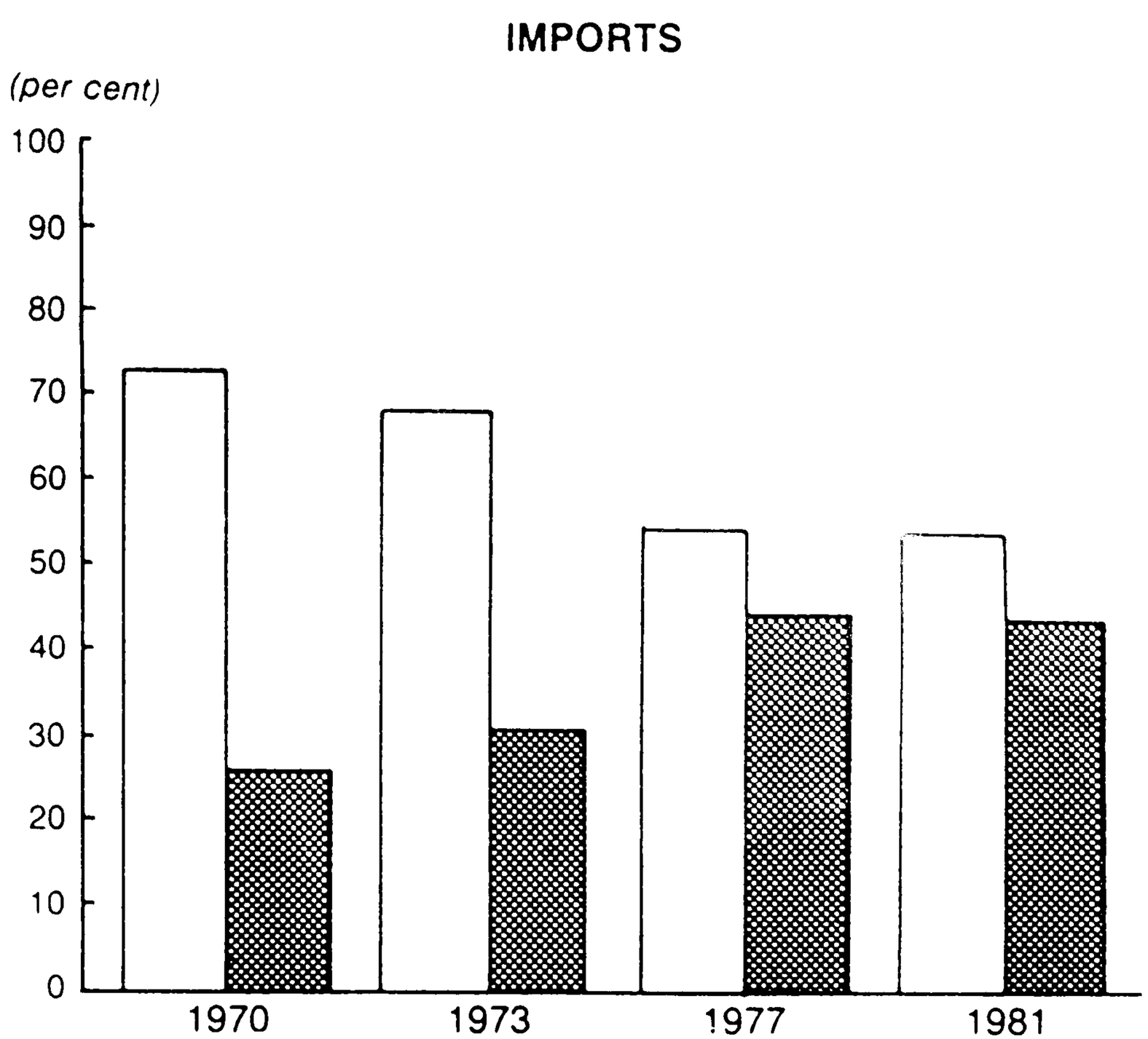


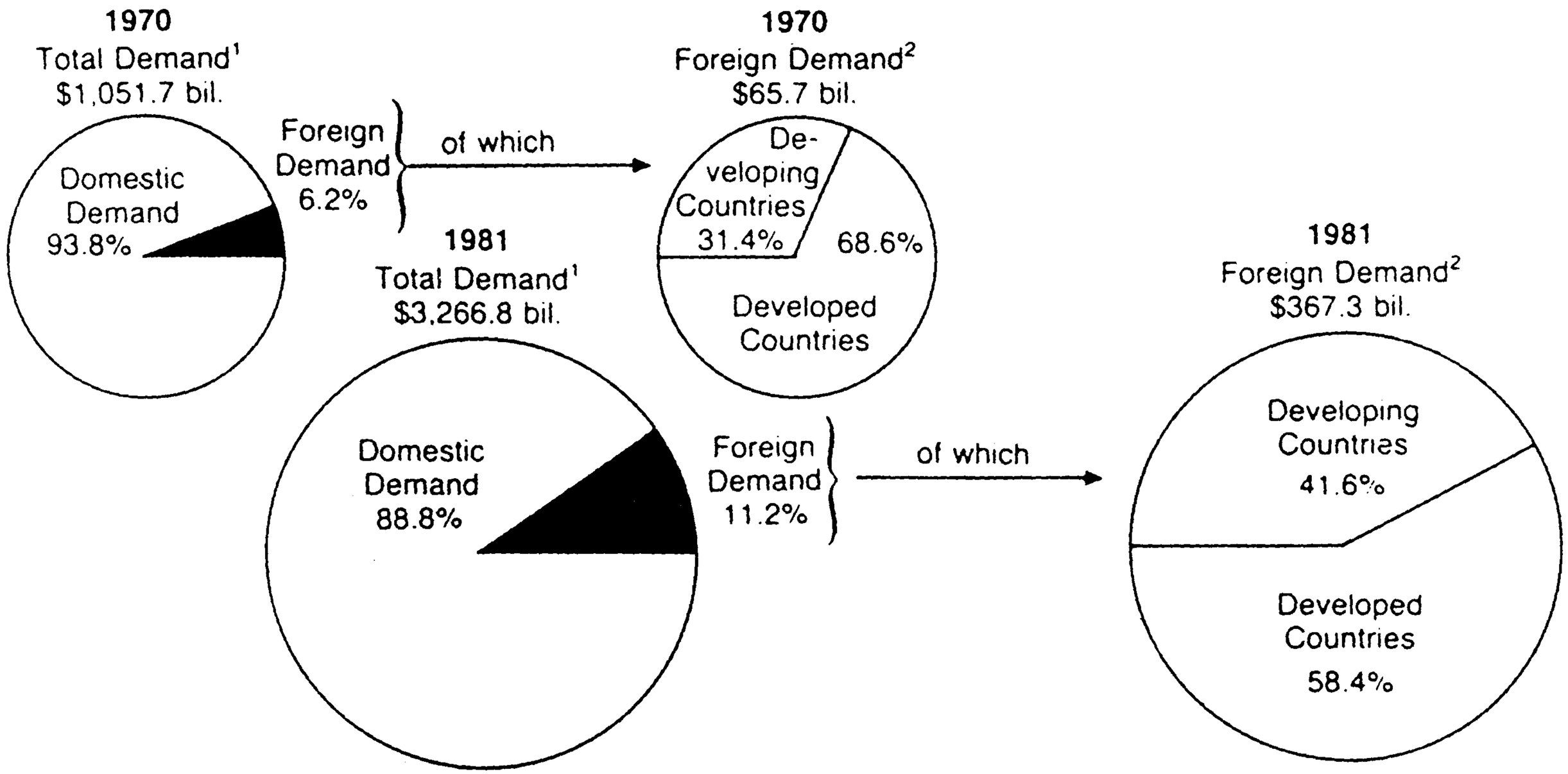
Table 3

	Total US Trade		Developing Countries'[1] Share of US Trade		Average Annual Growth in US Trade	Average Annual Growth in US Trade with Developing Countries
	1975	1981	1975	1981	1975 - 1981	1975 - 1981
EXPORTS	($ bil)		(per cent)		(per cent)	(per cent)
Foods, feeds and beverages	19.1	37.9	35.0	41.2	12.1	15.4
Fuels[2]	4.8	10.7	14.6	19.6	14.3	20.1
Industrial supplies[3]	25.4	57.0	39.4	40.4	14.4	14.9
Capital goods[4]	35.4	80.2	43.0	45.1	14.6	15.6
Autos[5]	10.1	18.0	27.4	33.7	10.1	13.9
Consumer Goods[6]	6.5	15.8	35.6	44.3	16.0	20.4
Other[7]	6.4	14.1	53.3	42.9	14.1	10.2
TOTAL	107.7	233.7	38.2	41.1	13.8	15.2
IMPORTS						
Foods, feeds and beverages	9.6	18.1	59.4	58.0	11.1	10.7
Fuels[2]	26.6	82.0	78.6	79.9	20.6	21.0
Industrial supplies[3]	22.2	52.6	23.9	25.7	15.5	16.9
Capital goods[4]	9.6	34.5	18.8	24.9	23.8	29.8
Autos[5]	11.7	29.7	2.6	3.4	16.8	22.2
Consumer goods[6]	13.7	38.7	42.3	53.0	18.9	23.4
Other[7]	2.7	5.7	22.2	24.6	13.3	15.2
TOTAL	96.1	261.3	42.0	46.3	18.1	20.1

1. Includes centrally planned developing economies
2. Includes coal and related fuels, petroleum and petroleum products and natural gas
3. Includes (inter alia) cotton, agricultural materials for industry, iron & steel, primary metals, lumber, chemicals, textiles, leather and glass
4. Includes (inter alia) electrical industrial equipment, nonelectrical industrial machinery, tractors, electronic computers, scientific instruments, aircraft, and railway equipment
5. Includes cars, trucks, buses, special purpose vehicles, engines and parts
6. Includes (inter alia) electric household appliances, radios, televisions, phonographs, clocks & watches, sporting equipment, apparel and other nondurables
7. Includes (inter alia) military type goods and miscellaneous items

Table 4

Trade as a Component of 'Total Demand' for US Goods and Services

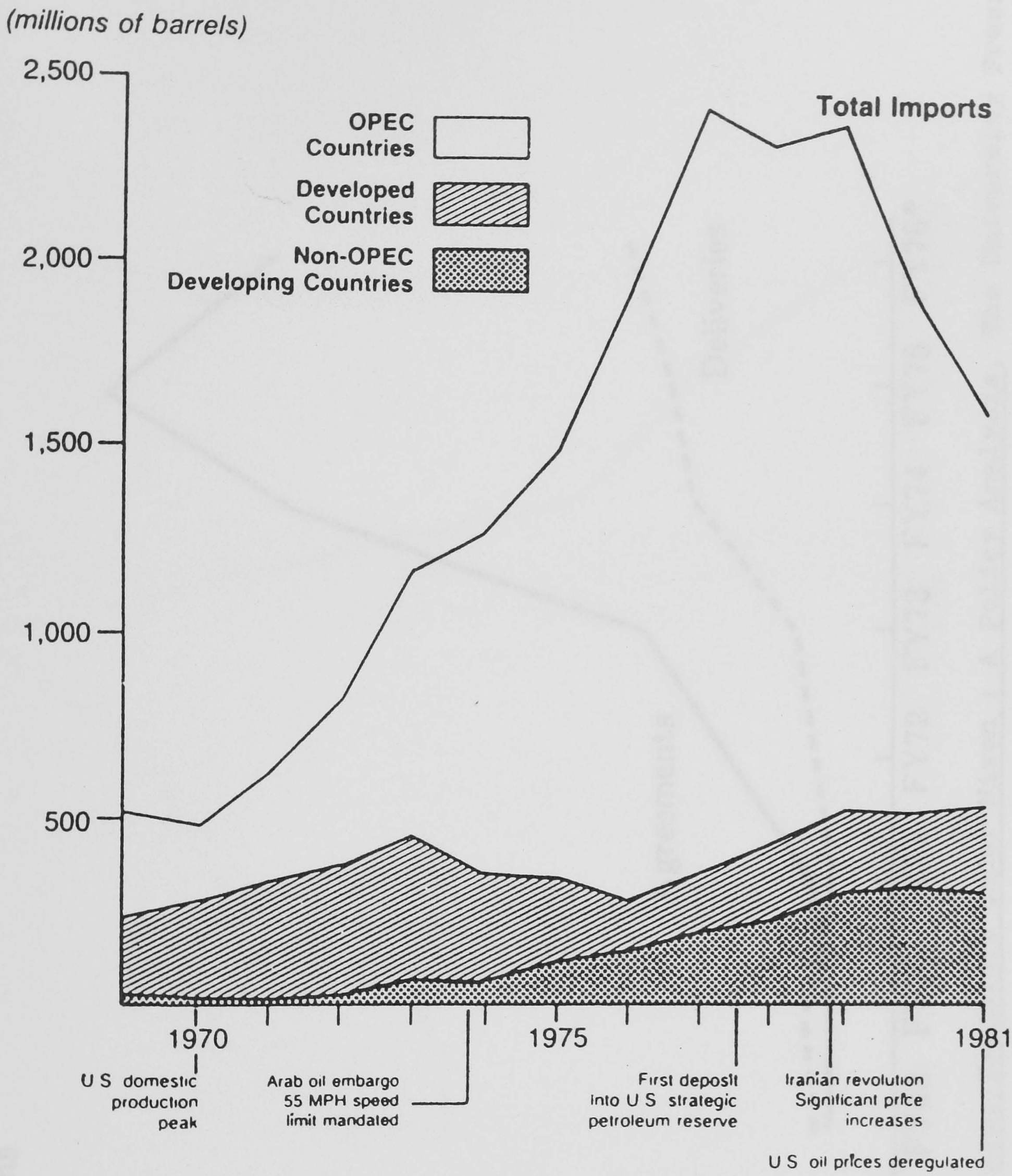


Over the past decade, foreign markets have accounted for a growing share of the total demand for US goods and services, increasing from about 6% of total demand in 1970 to about 11% in 1981. In particular, developing countries have become more significant trading partners for the United States. Their share of purchases has increased from 31.4% of US goods and services sold overseas in 1970 to 41.6% in 1981

1. 'Total Demand' is here defined as the sum of personal consumption expenditures, gross private domesti investment, government purchases of goods and services, and US exports of goods and services. Total demand differs from aggregate demand (GNP) in that US imports of goods and services have not been subtracted from exports in order to derive net exports.
2. Foreign demand is here defined as US exports of goods and services.

Table 5

Sources of US Crude Petroleum Imports, 1969-1981



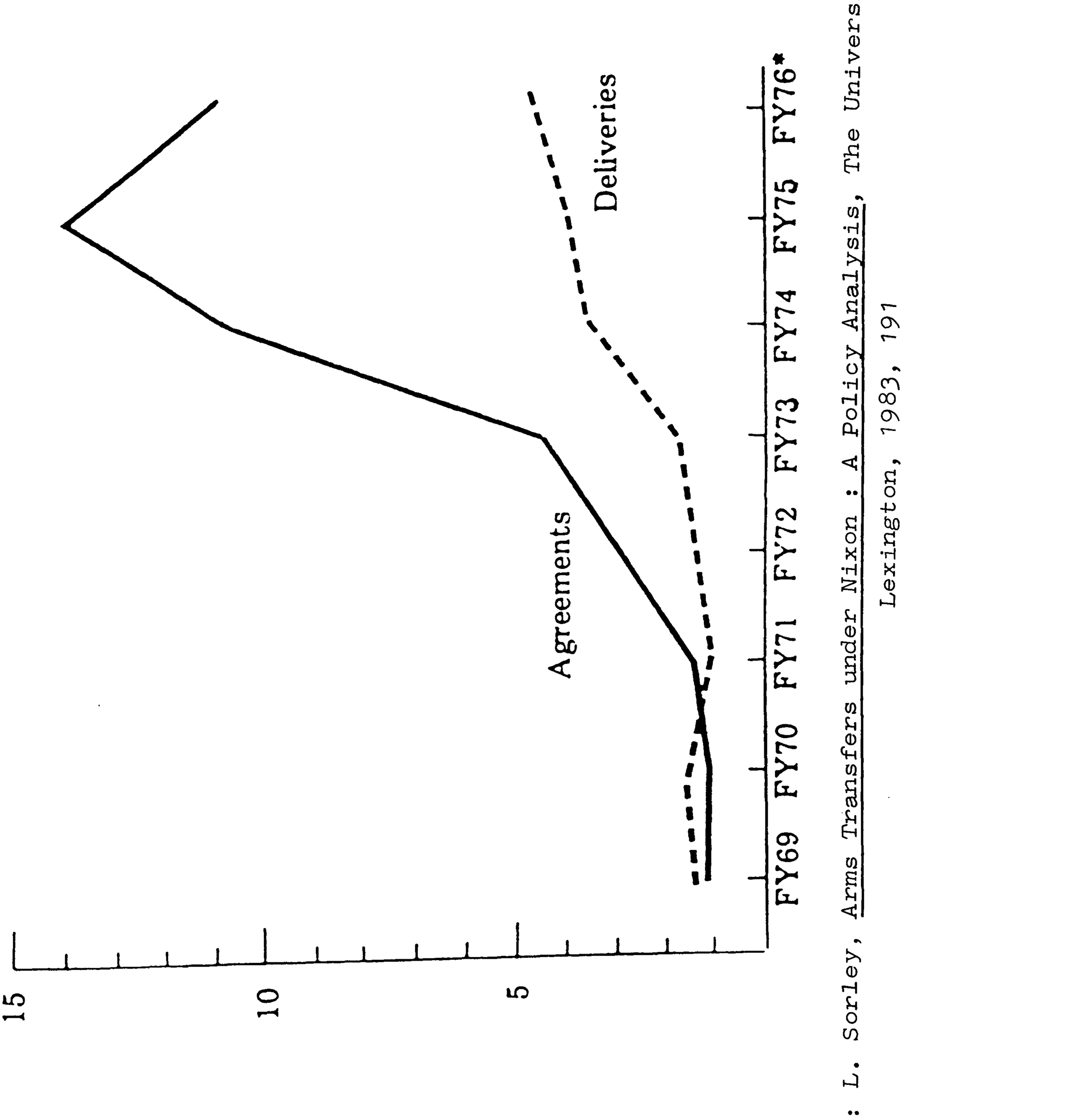
Percentage Shares of US Imports

	1970	1975	1981
OPEC Countries	46%	78%	66%
Non-OPEC Developing Countries	3%	7%	19%
Developed Countries	51%	15%	15%

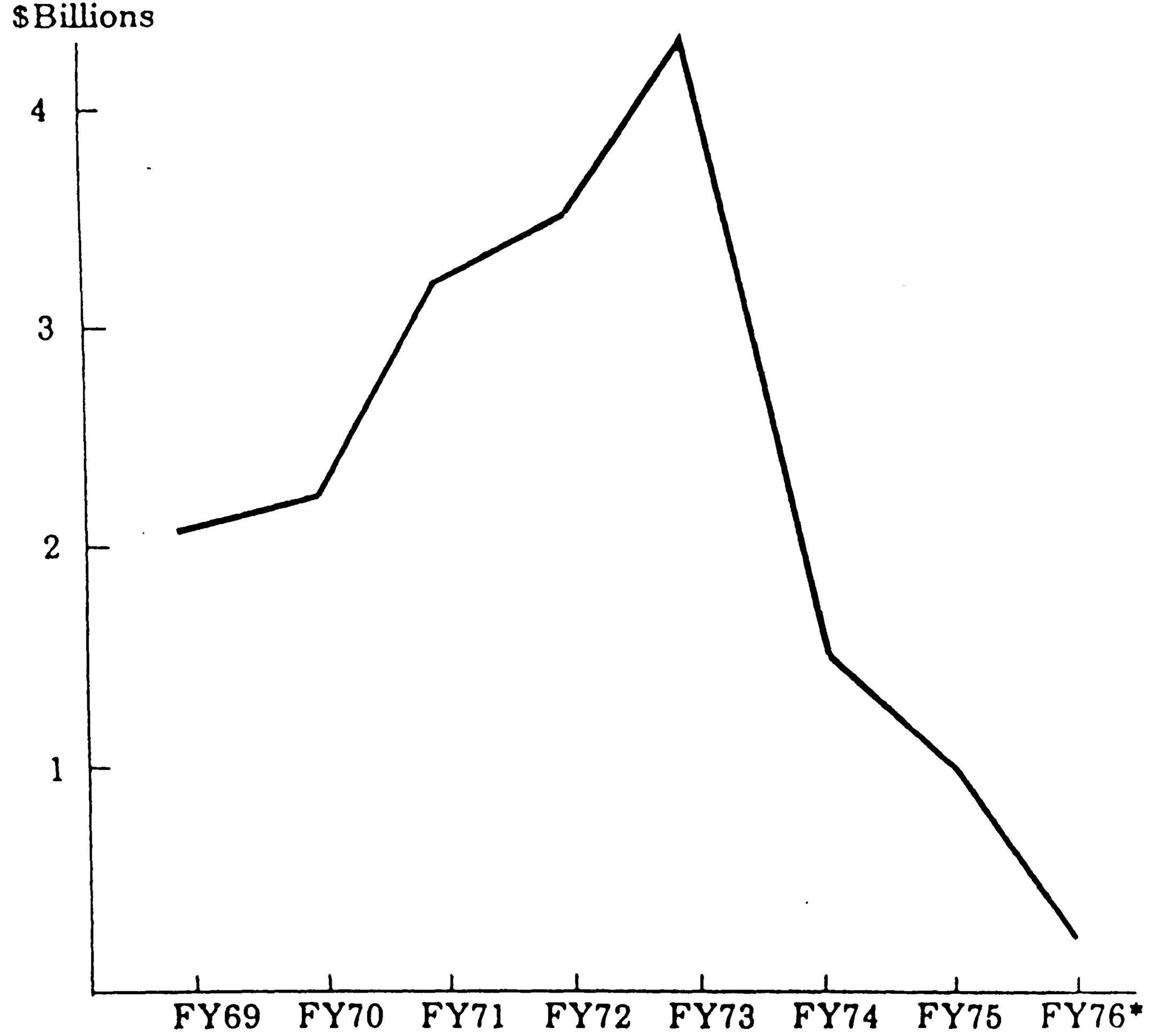
Average Annual Growth Rates of US Imports

	1969-73	1973-78	1978-81
OPEC Countries	29.4%	19.9%	-17.4%
Non-OPEC Developing Countries	9.9%	34.4%	8.4%
Developed Countries	15.9%	-12.2%	7.3%
Total Imports	23.2%	14.4%	-11.6%

Figure 1 : US Foreign Military Sales Worldwide, Fiscal Year 1969 - Fiscal Year 1976



Source : L. Sorley, Arms Transfers under Nixon : A Policy Analysis, The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 1983, 191



Source : L. Sorley, Arms Transfers under Nixon, 192

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